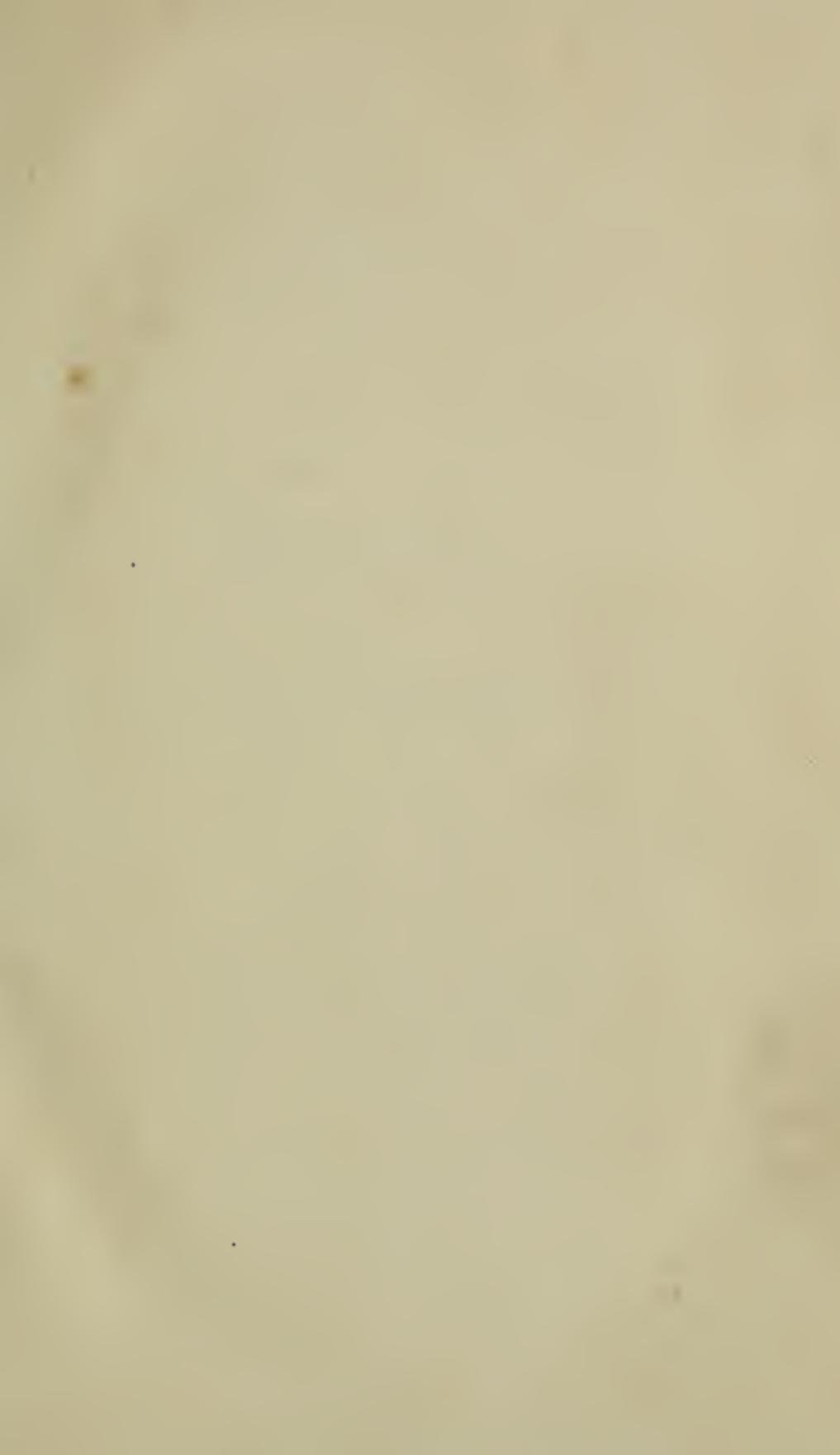


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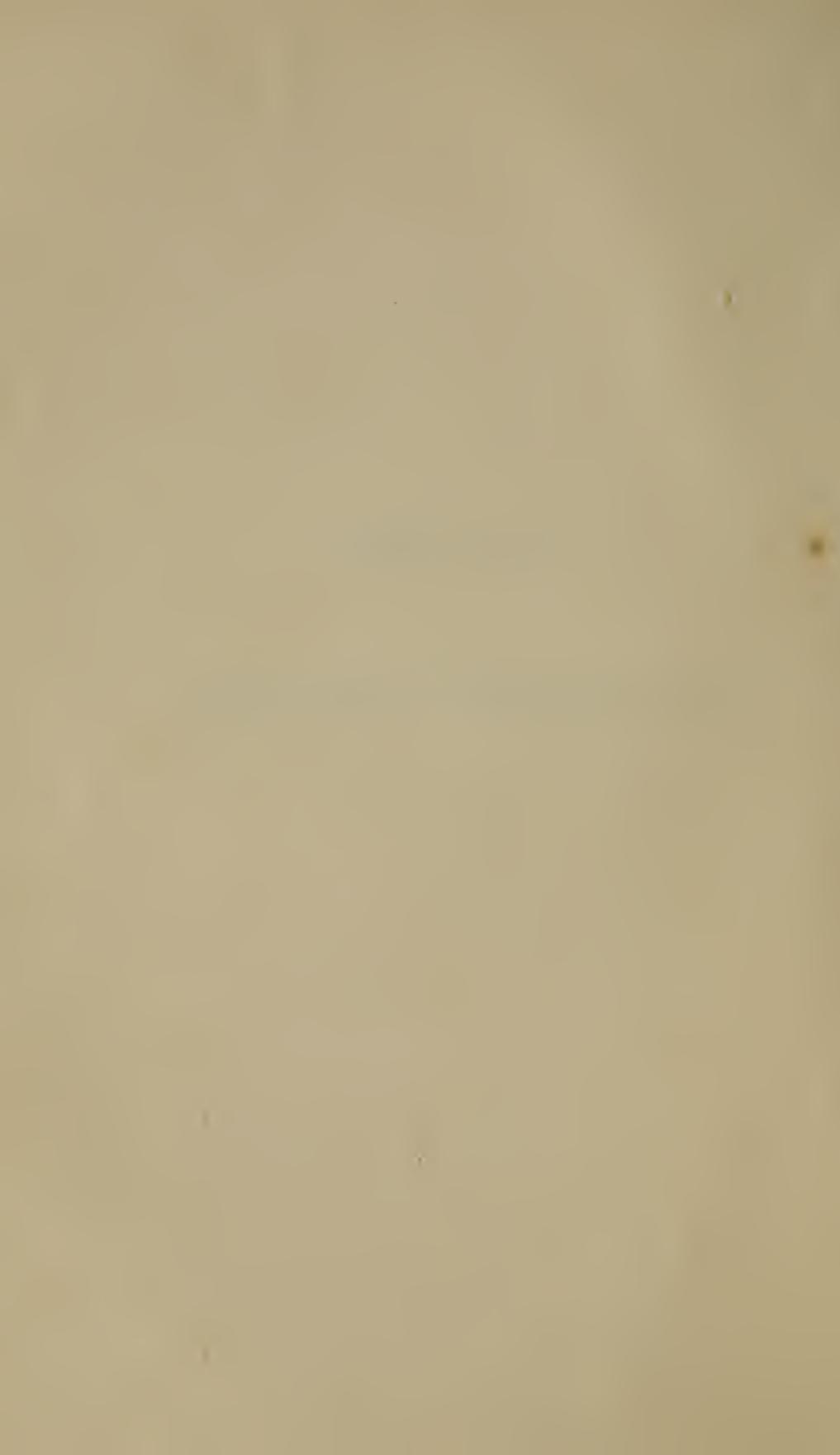


IRKDALE;

OR,

THE ODD HOUSE IN THE HOLLOW.

VOL. I.



IRKDALE;

OR,

THE ODD HOUSE IN THE HOLLOW.

A LANCASHIRE STORY.

BY

BENJAMIN BRIERLEY,

Author of "Tales and Sketches of Lancashire Life," "Chronicles of Waverlow,"
"The Layrock of Langleyside," &c.

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TO MY UNCLE,

RICHARD TAYLOR, OF LEIGH,

LANCASHIRE,

WHOM I REGARD AS

THE "MENTOR" OF MY EARLY YOUTH,

I BEG MOST GRATEFULLY TO INSCRIBE THIS STORY.

THE AUTHOR.

MANCHESTER,

May, 1865.

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IRKDALE;

OR,

THE ODD HOUSE IN THE HOLLOW.

CHAPTER I.

WHY was it called the “Odd House?” It was not the only detached dwelling in Irkdale. There was the “Crows’ Nest,” “Round-Thorn,” and “White-Gate” cottages that appeared to have nothing to do with each, or any other; but nestled themselves cozily on bank or in nook, with garden and orchard around them, as if it was no business of the world’s to pry into their situations, or meddle with their affairs. There were other dwellings of less pretensions than these, that appeared inclined to lead a

solitary existence. Diminutive thatched cottages they were, shrinking behind tall fences, as if they were afraid of being seen, and only indicating their whereabouts by the cheery cloudlets of smoke which they occasionally spouted from their nipples of chimneys.

But the “Odd House” had other claims to singularity than its merely being isolated from its neighbours. The occupants of this dwelling were odd in their persons and habits ; and the life led by both fowl and quadruped attached to the place was quite in keeping with everything besides. The dog, that shunned companionship with its fellows, and made a hermitage of its kennel, had a peculiar bark, and carried its tail after a fashion that no other dog would imitate. The cat, with very odd notions of dishonesty, never stole anything but what was intended for its food, and which had been placed, as pussy supposed, as much out of its way as possible. The donkey, a fine rough-coated fellow, that divided its time betwixt drawing very small loads of coals and timber, and carrying little boys in turns

round its pasture, had an odd way of exhibiting the stupidity characteristic of its species ; as it would never give way to any argument except good feeding and kind treatment ; consequently held the stick and goad (for who ever thought of driving a donkey with a whip ?) so completely at defiance, that he would invariably betray an apparent disposition to sleep on the slightest application of either weapon. The pigeons would not have been allowed to consort with birds of their feather, could their owner have netted over some few square miles of airy space ; but must have produced and reproduced among themselves until they had become quite a distinct race of pigeons. The poultry were quite an odd-looking family, and consisted of four ducks and a lame drake, that when they could not find a gap in the garden hedge through which to make their escape to the river, contented themselves with navigating a tub which had been let into the ground and filled with water for their especial aquatic use. These shared their owner's attentions with some half-dozen

hens of an uncertain breed and age, together with a cock, who had forgotten how to fight from long isolation from an antagonist, and whose crowing sounded like an attempted imitation of the occasional salutations of the donkey. An odd pig occupied a curiously-constructed sty, which had been formed out of any kind of materials that could be laid hold of, from an old loom post to a tub's ribs, and so jointed with ropes, mud, and mortar, as to defy architectural imitation. This pig divided its time betwixt eating and sleeping,—never seeming to desire anything in the shape of mental or physical recreation, but ate and dozed, grunted and snored, until within a few days of its becoming bacon. When this pig departed life, and followed its ancestors to the hooks in the kitchen, it would be succeeded by another, and, singularly enough, every generation of pigs appeared to inherit the faculties and habits of their predecessors, and got themselves into condition for family consumption with most philosophical resignation to the purposes of swinish life.

But the head of the household was, perhaps, the most singular being connected with it. He was odd—very odd! Favoured by nature with a sound constitution, enclosed in a robust frame, Jacob Robinson was not in some respects the strong and hardy man he appeared to be. He was known to have “little soft places” somewhere about him that contrasted oddly with his otherwise harsh and stubborn disposition. He was very self-opinionated ; would sooner sit the fire out than give way to an argument, though had any one flattered him by seeming to acquiesce in his remarks, they might gradually have led him back over all the ground he had disputed. Whenever his feelings were appealed to he was sure to be conquered, and would sometimes, when on the point of wishing an antagonist transported to the furthest nook of a certain “coal-hole,” drop the intended expression, through the influence of a well-timed word aimed at his better nature.

Jacob was once by trade a weaver ; and it has since been his boast that he never wove

plain sarsenet at less than a shilling per yard.* When the first penny was taken out of the twelve, he threw down his “picking-peg” with the sworn determination never to take it up again. Jacob kept his word. He gave up weaving, and commenced business as a weaver’s joiner. In his new occupation our friend excelled ere he had followed it more than a year, having “crapped” a little, as he expressed himself, before; and by frequent small purchases had got together a stock of tools that were a credit to the trade. It was not long before he had secured all the work of the kind required in Irkdale, as there was no other resident joiner, weavers having previously been obliged to take their jobs to other of the villages about.

* This would be about 40 years ago. The great silk-weavers’ strike, which took place in the year 1826, was brought about by an attempted reduction in the price paid for weaving plain sarsenet. It was held to be impossible to earn a living at less than a shilling per yard; and unheard-of privations were endured sooner than that a reduction should be submitted to. The same kind of fabric is now being woven at less than a *fourth* of the price then paid.

It was a study to see "Jakey" at his work ; never appearing in a hurry, but taking everything as coolly as if it had been merely pastime. Had any one attempted to "push" him with a job, he would lay down his saw, or plane, or hammer, whichever he might be using at the time ; turn his back to the bench, and, putting his arms akimbo, would say—"I reckon if God o' Meety had t' mak' th' woald o'er ogen, sich like chaps as thee 'ud nobbut alleaw him abeawt two days for t' do it in." Then he would resume his work after having tantalized his client to the utmost stretch of patience ; and the shavings would begin to curl again, or the saw would whistle through the plank, or the hammer would operate upon a nail-head as if the blows were timed by music.*

* It is related of the person who "sat" for the portrait of Jacob Robinson, that on one occasion being importuned by a neighbour to repair a shuttle when he had other pressing work in hand, he agreed to oblige his friend on certain conditions. The weaver was a noted fiddler, and the conditions were that he should fetch his instrument and play upon it all the

And what odd notions possessed the cranium of our eccentric friend! By some people he was set down as an Atheist; but this imputation he would have stoutly denied, had he cared for convincing any one to the contrary. He prided himself, however, in being unaccountable in this respect, and anything by which he could mystify his neighbours, regarding his thoughts and feelings in a religious point of view, he would readily make use of. Whether he was a Tory or Radical in politics was much disputed; for at one time he would denounce “Kingcraft,” and at another decry reform; or what he pretended to dislike most—“progress.” Progress! There was not such a thing to Jacob, —not in its accepted sense. Progress was to him dissolution. Aught that tended to disturb the old system of jogging through life

time the joiner was at work upon the shuttle. The weaver complied; the fiddle was produced, and for about two hours (the time occupied in repairing the shuttle) the little workshop was as merry as a tap-room at a Lancashire “wakes.”

without the necessity of pushing others aside, was sure to lead to social and national ruin. He could never be prevailed upon to touch a daily newspaper, if such a thing by any possibility could have found its way into Irkdale. It was “trumpery,” “balderdash,” fit for nobody to read only such as were running the world a race, and wished to be foremost in everything. Newspapers in his “yard-wide days,” as he would term the period of his earliest acquaintance with manhood, *were* newspapers; not like those of the present day, made up of lies to be contradicted by succeeding publications.

Besides, people could read too much, Jacob would often maintain; but few in his circumstances had read more than he. Odd books were his favourites, however—picked up where no one knew—old rough-calf-bound volumes that were odorous of damp and decay, but which opened with difficulty, notwithstanding their old age. These books he might have been found poring over any evening in the week, except Saturday, when he

would take his week's information to the kitchen nook of the "Jolly Jumper," there to be dispensed over his usual three pints of "spigot milk," to such of the company as might choose to listen to his discourse. And few there were in Irkdale who did not look upon our friend as an oracle on matters of politics and social economy, however they might disagree in their estimate of his religious principles. When he pronounced Cobden to be a "thief an' a murtherer, ut owt t' have his neck weel lapt wi' summut strunger nor clewkin," the whole kitchen applauded till the suspended ale-cans rung again; and when he said "James Watt wur Sattin (Satan) lett'n lose," and that the first puff of a steam-engine was a signal for "heigh, lads, heigh! an' th' owd lad tak thoose ut ha' no' strength enoogh to keep up i'th' race," people wondered if he had obtained his insight into such things through some supernatural agency.

"To th' brimstone-an'-traycle shop wi' 'em a'!" he would sometimes say; "factories an'

railroads, an' a' such ne'er-do-good prout. If I mut have my will, I'd ha' sich a blaze as ther hasno bin sin' owd George o' Jammie's barn wur ov a foyer; for I'd mak' a hally-blash of every factory i' Englandshire. Cotton be hanged! what dun we want wi' cotton? I ha' no' worn a yard o' calico sin' I're ta'en eawt o' my cleawts; an' I never shall wear any, beawt they puttn me in a calico coffin shirt when I'm deead. An' what's this bother abeawt a good time comin', if we'n wait a bit lunger? We may wait, an' wait till we getn th' skin off us finger-nails, but good times 'll come no mooar. They'n never bin nowt to brag on sin' childer gan o'er pillin' turmits wi' ther teeth, an' rentin' a' ther clooas off ther backs wi' blackberryin'. At one time, if folk could ha' getn ther hoides stufft wi' porritch, an' a two-thri ale-sops neaw-an'-agen, an' could ha' keawrt reawnd th' ha'stone ov a winter's neet, tellin' boggart-tales till ther yure (hair) had bin like a bunch o' skewers o' ther yeds, they'd ha' bin as happy as th' neets wur lung; but neaw—'od sink it,

Mally ! bring me another pint afore I brast wi' thinkin'."

At home, Jacob was a kind of domestic king. He ruled the household—not with a rod of iron—but with a very close hand. Contradiction he would not tolerate at all ; and opposition he treated as a species of mutiny that must be punished with blows, or something equally severe. He, however, modified his *régime* as his only child grew up, until, at length, a grunt and a smothered growl became the only expressions by which he sought to convey the displeasure he felt at any violation of the domestic discipline. The dangerous proportions to which his son Dick had grown was in all probability the chief cause of Jakey's relaxing the temper of his rule. The former's hand was getting too much like a shoulder of mutton to be contemplated with satisfaction by any one who might be inclined to settle a rough point with its owner ; and the noses of his clogs had somehow a sort of bull-dogish grin about them, as if they augured danger to an anta-

gonist when they chose to be frolicsome. Dick, however, had so much good sense added to filial respect as to induce him not to quarrel with his father, if he could by any reasonable degree of submission avoid it; and the latter, whenever he thought proper to assert his prerogative, would do so in a manner that permitted his retiring with dignity if unsuccessful. He still held "Old Nanny" in conjugal subjection, though he would permit her to let off her bottled wrath at such times as he stayed too long with his tavern companions, and came home eloquent with musical admiration of "Bonnie Jean."

Of a' the airts the wind could blaw,
He dearly liked the west,
For there the bonnie lassie lived,
The lassie he lo'ed best.

And Nanny would say he might "goo to th' west, an' tak' th' snicket with him" if he liked, for aught she cared; which was a kind of thunder-shower to the dame, that would brighten up her weather for many a day to follow.

Thus the “Odd House” preserved its quaint character for many years, and would in all probability have still retained it, had it not been for the occurrence of an event which will be detailed in future chapters, and which our odd friend’s association with the convivialities of the “Jolly Jumper” was the means of bringing about.

CHAPTER II.

THE “Jolly Jumper” originally sprang from the kernel of a “hush shop,”* holding its licence direct from “Owd Clinker,” the blacksmith, until, branching out into the jolly proportions which the house at the present time assumes, it consented to pay a yearly contribution to the revenue of King William

* The term “hush shop” is applied to houses in which an illicit trade in beer, &c., is carried on: “hush” signifying that the company frequenting such places were expected to conduct themselves as orderly as possible, that no alarm might be given to parties in authority. The banks of the Irk and the Medlock have been noted for these resorts, which for a long period held the constable and the exciseman at defiance. Bamford, in his “Passages in the Life of a Radical,” humorously describes a scene he once witnessed in a “hush shop;” and the incidents there related may be taken as an average specimen of what generally occurs at such places during the carousals of the company.

the Fourth, and thus give an honest and legitimate countenance to the world. Matters became changed on this assumption of legality. The “Jumper” considered himself entitled to make a noise in the neighbourhood, and prepared the lungs of his establishment accordingly. No longer the smith sang in whispers, but roared as did his smithy-fire, or rung out his notes as if they were strokes upon his anvil. No longer did Jacob Robinson curse the government up the chimney, as if afraid of his denunciations reaching interested ears, but proclaimed in open kitchen his alienation from king-craft, priest-craft, cotton-craft, iron-craft, and everything else which he imagined stood in the way of a “gradely owd fashint plan o’ lettin’ folk do th’ best they con for one another.” No longer did “Swinkey” dance in his stocking feet until he had little occasion for garters, but made fire fly with his clogs, as he rolled, and kicked, and capered on the floor to “Clinker’s” “diddling” of the “College” hornpipe. Everybody grew noisy on a sudden as soon as the sign went up that

told people they might get “drunk on the premises,” under the shelter of an Act of Parliament; and thus the “Jolly Jumper,” whose effigy was portrayed on the sign-board as engaged in the exploit of vaulting over a turnpike, that from the perspective appeared to be considerably higher than a neighbouring haystack, sprang into a full-blown alehouse with all the suddenness of a magical creation.

The house stood as if purposely placed there for a man-trap, as few could pass it who were possessed of the “price of a pint,” so invitingly did it nestle itself in a sly bend of the road, up to the very eyes in garden shrubs, through which on winter evenings a cheerful light would twinkle, and about whose windows in summer days the honeysuckles would be creeping, as if they wished to reach the door and shake hands with the company, or dip their thirsty petals in the foam of a newly-filled “pint.” Jolly honeysuckles! Then the bedroom curtains would be fluttering out of the windows, like fairies waving their pocket-

handkerchiefs, and so suggestive were they of sweet repose, that the traveller would feel drowsy at the sight of them, and bespeak a bed before he had thought about his dinner. Happy traveller ! And the interior, too—the bar, if bar it could be called, that was half dairy, half pantry, chalked over with what would be to some people unintelligible hieroglyphics, but which to others were indisputable proofs that they had gone further in debt than they had intended. This apparently inexhaustible repository of good things no one presumed to enter, except the landlord and his jollier half, and was therefore held as sacred from the intrusions of even the most unscrupulous customer, as if it had stood within an enchanted circle, and was guarded by an invisible power. You might have peeped through the window, and beheld the phalanx of stone bottles that studded the floor like so many bloated “ninepins,” for wooden barrels were never allowed to pollute the nectar which our “Boniface” served to his customers ; and you might have gazed longingly at the

flitches of bacon which hardly ever ceased swinging, or the cheese, shining with a rich mellowness from between the folds of the white diaper cloths that enveloped it ; but there your acquaintance must have ceased, unless you chose to order a feast prepared from the dainties you beheld. Within that sanctum no tavern dandy would be allowed to switch his cane, and talk soft nonsense to some greedy-eared Phillis, who knew not the count of her gaping admirers. “ Johnny Smithels ” would have helped him over the half-door before he had time to imitate the patron genius of the establishment, by taking a dignified leap in that direction. Fuddle where the chairs are strong, and the table legs as stubborn as loom-posts,—where nothing has so much chance of being broken as your head, and where the noise you make won’t offend delicate ears. That was Johnny’s constant injunction. Bar-parlour “ frippery ” and cigar commentation were elements that found no favour beneath the roof of the “ Jolly Jumper.”

The kitchen belonging to the establishment was the favourite rendezvous of thirsty villagers. It had been added to the house at the time the licence was obtained, and now spread its whitened floor like a huge table-cloth that a kiln of a fireplace threw shadows over at even, and on which the sun made dreamy-looking panoramas at noontide. Here white-aproned lovers of ale and merriment used to congregate when the shuttles had ceased to rattle, and the good wife had cleared away the remnants of the porridge supper; and right merry and chatty and noisy they were betimes.* They would fight over again

* A LANCASHIRE HAND-LOOM WEAVER.—“The person addressed was leaning against a turnstile at the entrance of a footpath, which struck out of the lane. His appearance suggested to me that he might be one of those important individuals to be met with in almost every village, whose sole occupation seems to be the acquirement and dissemination of ‘news;’ who have their own seat by the alehouse kitchen fireside, and generally the least elbow-room at the ‘parliament’ stump! He was an elderly man,—a weaver, as was evidenced by sundry rovings of black and coloured silk, which adhered to different parts of his person. His habiliments were of a description peculiar to his class, and

wars whose battle-fields were now yielding to the scythe or the reaping-hook ; knock kings about as would a chess-player ; elect governments with the ease and freedom of club committees, and kick them out again as they would a set of skittles by which they had lost a succession of games. Often would a song act as a “breaker” to these debates, and the ceiling would receive a chorus that

were mostly in fashion thirty or forty years ago. He was bareheaded ; and in the absence of coat or jacket, he had a pair of black stockings, with the feet cut off, drawn over his arms, leaving a bunch of shirt-sleeve bare upon each shoulder. His lower extremities were encased in stout cord ‘shorts,’ he never having allowed the innovation of trowsers, or ‘stove-pipes,’ as he termed them, to overcome him, but still gloried in buttons and streamers at the knees, with veritable lambswool for his calves. His thin iron-grey hair was cropped close to his sconce, except where a slight fringe fell over his forehead. His eyes were bright for their age, and partook somewhat of the hue of his nasal organ, which was a bluish-red—approaching the ruby ; and as they twinkled in their sockets with a rather doubting leer, they gave a quizzical expression to his countenance, which plainly asked—‘what sort of an owd foo’ are yo’ tryin’ t’ mak’ o’ me ?’”

Vide “*Daisy Nook*,” in “*Tales and Sketches of Lancashire Life*.”

made the very boards imagine a storm was shaking the house. And when the jest flashed out, and scintillations of genial humour twinkled through some quaint story, then would the laugh ring forth so heartily, that the lungs which produced it might have been made for nothing else but roaring. The nicely-seated parlour, termed “th’ Heawse o’ Lords,” no one cared to frequent, except such as kept ledgers and wore broad cloth, and these were few in Irkdale. The shopkeeper down the road did sometimes hob-a-nob with the cattle dealer from the upper end; but these were exclusive and ignorant, and for want of something to talk about, usually went to sleep over their potations.

One Saturday evening, in the early fall of the year 1848, when the Parisians had knocked over the Bourbon dynasty, and sent “Mister Smith” with his “umbrella” to Folkstone; when the obscure Metropolitan special constable had laid down his staff to aspire to the sceptre of an empire, a happy jorum, with

far humbler aspirations than possessed the arch-plotter of December, were making merry in the kitchen of the “Jolly Jumper.” The events of the year had wrought some advantages to the fortunes of Irkdale. The silk trade of Lyons, as one of the fruits of the Revolution, had temporally crossed the Channel, and taken up its abode in Manchester. Work grew plentiful in the villages around; and if the prosperity which set in at this period was limited as to its duration, it was happily made the most of by those who shared it. The “white-aproned” came out strong and independent. They wallowed, as it were, in a sea of silk; built pig-styes, formed money-clubs, paid old shop scores, and exhibited other signs of social and domestic improvement. No wonder then that from the traditional love of “a crack o’er a glass,” which attaches itself to Lancashire working men, an extra “brew,” would now and then be required at the “Jolly Jumper.” Prosperity must be toasted, washed down, fuddled over, otherwise it could not

last ; and who could furnish such wholesome “ spigot-milk ” as our obliging host of the “ Jumper,” Johnny Smithels ?

Well, as I was saying, a happy jorum were making merry in the kitchen of the only “ public ” in Irkdale. The company were a mixture of such elements as may be supposed to graduate from the extremity of social oil and water. There were the pert, the snappish, the overbearing, and the insinuating. There were hot tempers and cool ; the profound thinker and the superficial observer ; but all could laugh at a good “ roasting,” except such as happened to be spitted ; and merry and loud grew the song and the debate. Close to the hob sat Jacob Robinson—quarrelsome, dogmatic, and as “ cute as Dick’s hat-band.”* In the opposite nook perched “ Clinker,” who, if he was not a weaver, loved to enjoy himself among his neighbours as well as any one. He had blown out his

* “ As cute as Dick’s hat-band, which went nine times round the hat and would not *tie*,” is a saying often applied in Lancashire to queer-tempered people.

fire, washed his hands to the complexion of the short pipe which stuck like an ebony peg from his mouth, and now sat with one leg carelessly thrown over the other, hammering out such arguments as would have puzzled a whole Senate to comprehend. On the dresser “Swinkey” lounged and rattled his clogs ; and near him “Robin th’ Milk-mon,” whose whole ideas centered in so many “quarts to the meal,” and the price of hay, leaned back his chair, contemplating tobacco smoke, and laughing when others set the example. But the merriest of all was “Pot-hook ;” a jolly, come-day, go-day fellow, of whom as a proof of his geniality it was said—that he never saved a farthing in his life. He could make “Jakey” laugh when no one else could —nay, draw him out “as fine as pin-wire,” when he chose to humour that odd piece of humanity. Now he had bantered him into sullen silence, which was at last broken by a third attempt on the part of “Pot-hook ” to raise his friend’s brows from the overshadowing of his face.

“To owd Sam wi’th’ French Revolution, and a’ sich like bab-heawsim!” exclaimed Pot-hook: “Conno we raise th’ steeam for a sung?”

“*Steeam*, Pot; *Steeam*!” said “Jakey,” lifting his chin out of the fold of his shirt front, and opening his eyelids like two very large cockle-shells: “Dunno thee mention that word agen i’ my yerrin. It edges my teeth wurr·nor a railroad whistle when it’s yeawlin like a kennel o’ clemmed heawnd-whelps, or a donkey wi’th’ bally-wartch. Dunno thee mention it agen.”

“Oh,” observed “Swinkey,” as if he had called to his recollection something forgotten before, “han yo’ yerred they’re gooin t’ mak a railroad through Irkdale?”

“Ay, they’rn sayin’ summut abeawt it at th’ Exchange yesterday,” said the milkman, with the air of one who was conscious of having made his first joke.

“At th’ Exchange?” sneered the joiner; “what wur theaw doin’ at th’ Exchange? I’d sooner back thee bein’ at th’ wayter-works.”

There was a laugh against the milkman at this remark; and Jakey laughed among the rest, but his merriment was not of the most angelic sort.

“They sen it’ll go close past yore heawse,” said Swinkey, eyeing Jacob with the expression of one who was expecting a thunderbolt to be launched into the middle of the room.

“Let it,” exclaimed the other, “an’ if ther’s as mich peawther i’ th’ country as ’ll do it, I’ll mak a Meawnt Vesuvius on’t, if my own cabin goes i’th’ crash. I’ll ha’ noane o’ ther yeawlin’, puffin’, gruntin’ hoyrn hosses, scutterin’ past same as if th’ owd lad wur droivin’ o’th’ woald toart his sooty kitchen. Nawe, nawe; I’d as lief t’ live up to th’ middle in a moss-doytch, as nee one o’ thoose. It’s same as owd Calamity sheawtin’ eawt ‘a’ eternity’ i’ one’s ears, yerrin’ such day o’ judgment noyses.”

“Day of judgment, Jacob; day of judgment!” exclaimed a venerable-looking, but vacant-eyed individual, who was seated upon an elevated chair at the head of the kitchen;

“it will come to all of us—the poor man in his hut, the duke in his castle, and the king upon his throne. None shall escape it.”

The company bowed with an assumed reverence to the speaker.

“Harken his Majesty,” said Pot-hook, with a peevish wink at Jacob Robinson.

“King Saul spakes,” said Swinkey, taking off his hat, and twisting his countenance into an expression of mock gravity.

The individual who had excited these remarks was a being of unaccountable origin and character. He had come into the village—whence no one knew; and what were his antecedents was as much a mystery. Some of the more credulous believed him to be a deposed monarch who had been compelled to fly his kingdom, and seek obscurity in a strange land. Others regarded him as a less illustrious person, who once moved in good society, but had suffered reverses of fortune that had brought on a species of quiet insanity, which gave him the character of a visionary eccentric. Jacob Robinson “knew

he're summut above common," and always treated him with a respect and deference that hardly appeared to belong to his disposition. "Saul" was a frequent visitor at Jacob's house; was welcome at his table at all times, but more especially on a Sunday, when the dinner was of a kind superior to the rest of the week's fare. On these occasions the "king" would sit at the head of the table, wait until all had partaken of the meal—which observance he adopted as a precaution against poison—then feast right royally on the tasted dishes. To such an extent did this fear of becoming the victim of the poisoner haunt "Saul's" mind, that every kind of food he ate must be previously tasted, and any drink he might partake of he would see poured from the bottle or jug from which others were drinking. These suspicions were a constant source of trouble to his entertainers; but they never appeared to regard them as a reflection upon their hospitality, but were attributed to some cause connected with the mystery of his past life. Nothing could be got from him as

to his early history, save that his subjects were an ungrateful people, and that his crown was a crown of thorns. As a set-off against the loss of his throne, he had been installed in the wooden chair of a small school in Irkdale, where he wielded a birchen sceptre over some score of the rising generation, who were entrusted to his rule, more for the sake of being nursed than for the purpose of receiving instruction. The company at the “Jolly Jumper” were inclined to tease this pseudo King; but the rising ire of his doughty “Warwick,” Jacob Robinson, turned their raillery upon the latter, and Jacob, from his oddity of temper, was always a sufficient mark for his companions to spend their merriment upon without their being necessitated to direct it against others.

“Let his Majesty a-be,” said Jacob, as he drew his nose from the interior of a pint pot, the contents of which his lips had been courting for some seconds. “If he’d bin on his gradely throne neaw, an’ i’ full pomp an’ majesty o’ peawer, same as I da’ say he wur

oncet, I should ha' been as mich inclined for
bully-raggin him as ony *on* yo'; but neaw he's
dropt like Jone o' Daf's poratoes, I think we
owt to tak pity *on* him, an' let him a-be."

"Reet, Jacob," said the smith, giving a
most emphatic puff from his pipe, "Come,
Saul, sup up an' have a pint wi' me."

"You are a loyal and true man, Clinker,"
said the King, "an' I'll even do as you bid
me." Then draining his pot, he hammered in
a most plebeian manner upon the dresser, which
brought the landlady to their attendance.

"You are my Hebe, Mary. Jove wants
his nectar," he continued, his face beaming
with a regal smile, that was quite in contrast
with the lowering expression of his champion's
countenance.

The "nectar" was brought, which, after
being tasted by "Hebe," as a guarantee that
it was free from poison, the monarch took it
in his hand, and drank to the health of
"Clinker," whom he named his "Vulcan."

"I wonder," said he, "if the Olympian
king kept such wine as this."

“I dunno think he’d as good a brew-heawse as owd Johnny’s,” observed Swinkey, grinning.

“Nor maut like that ut ust mak owd Johnny drunken when he’re grindin’ it,” said another.

“They had no whoam-brewed i’ thoose days, had they, Jacob?” observed Pot-hook, bent upon drawing his crony out a little further.

“That’s mooar nor theaw knows,” replied the other, with an implied sneer in the manner of saying it. “Did not Owd Bacchus keep a ‘hush-shop,’ an’ sell thrippunny to wagginers, an’ pig-keepers, an’ sheep-breeders? An’ what wur that but whoam-brewed? Yo may depend on’t ut ther’s bin spigot-milk ever sin th’ woald ud groo a peck o’ barley; an’ if it wur a’ like this, an’ we didno get too mich on’t, it ud be betther nor drinkin foyer-an-brimstone cawt o’ glass bottles. Neaw then, here’s to whoam-brewed; an’ if Swinkey ’ll sing us that sung o’ his I’ll pay for a quart; but Pot-hook shanno sup.”

“ What for, Jakey ?—what have I done amiss ? ” said Pot-hook, with feigned astonishment in his looks.

“ Gullook, theaw little rootin tooad ! Sing, Swinkey ; ” and Jacob set himself in an attitude for listening, whilst the merry little fellow on the dresser, ever ready to oblige his companions, prepared his voice for singing. After shaking the dust out of his pipe, the latter at once commenced, in tones that appeared to alarm the ceiling, the song of

WHOAM-BREWED.*

Ther's nowt i' this woald like my own chimdy-nook,
When my cheear up to th' foyer aw've poo'd ;
When th' wife has just rocked th' little babby asleep,
An' then fotched me a mug o' whoam-brewed.

Whoam-brewed, whoam-brewed ;
An' then fotched me a mug o' whoam-brewed.

Hoo smiles, does th' owd dame, as if nobbo just wed,
When her caps an' her napkins hoo's blued,

* The above is the original text of the song :—*aw*, *aw'm*, *aw'd*, *aw've*, being the manner in which *I*, *I'm*, *I'd*, *I've*, are pronounced by Lancashire people. In the dialogue I have given the correct English, in order to be more intelligible.

An' then warms up her face wi' a blink o' th' owd leet
 Ut shoines in a mug o' whoam-brewed.

Whoam-brewed, &c.

It's as breet as a glent at eawr Maytime o' life,
 Or as havin owd plessurs renewed,
 Is the sunleet at fo's reawnd mi ha'stone at neet,
 Through a sheaw'r fro a mug o' whoam-brewed.

Whoam-brewed, &c.

“ My heawse is my castle,” has often been sung,
 Wheere no king, duke, or lord dar’ intrude ;
 But it needs no hard feightin to keep eawt a foe
 When aw truce wi’ a mug o’ whoam-brewed.

Whoam-brewed, &c.

Care onct coom a neighbourin, an’ potthert at th’ dur,
 An’ his nose into th’ keighole he screwed ;
 But he soon scampert back to his feyther the dule,
 When he see’d aw’d a mug o’ whoam-brewed.

Whoam-brewed, &c.

When aw’m thinkin what toylin an’ frabbin ther needs
 Through this woald to get dacently poo’d,
 It melts into pastime, does th’ hardest o’ wark,
 If it’s helped wi’ a mug o’ whoam-brewed.

Whoam-brewed, &c.

It’ll help us to fettle booath th’ nation an’ th’ laws,
 An’ to sodher up mony a feud ;
 An’ if the woald has gone wrank, we con reet it agen
 By th’ peawer of a mug o’ whoam-brewed.

Whoam-brewed, &c.

Then come to mi' elbow, theaw primest o' drinks,
Wi' sweetest o' pleasures indued ;
The jolliest neighbour to jog wi' through life
Is a full peawchin mug o' whoam-brewed.

Whoam-brewed, &c.

The uproar that followed the singing of this song had scarcely subsided, when the company were startled by the apparition of a black, closely-cropped head poking itself inquisitively through the doorway. To this head were attached shoulders which gave a peculiar shrug as the rest of the body was drawn after them into the kitchen ; and when it was discovered that a little girl followed close behind, the visitors seemed to excite an additional interest.

“ Do we intrude ? ” said the new comer, who appeared to be a stranger to all present.

“ Oh, nawe, nawe, nawe,” exclaimed several.

“ You are welcome to our court,” said King Saul, rising from his throne, and bowing to the stranger. “ Jacob, give our friend attendance.”

“ Come to this cheear, Mesthur,” said the

joiner, vacating his seat, and motioning to the visitor: “ Yo looken toyart, an’ I con do anywheere. Clinker, poo that stoo eawt o’th nook, an’ let this little wench sit deawn on it, for hoo favers hoo could do wi’ a bit of a rest. Theere, neaw,” he exclaimed, as the girl advanced timidly towards the fire, and seated herself upon a low stool which “ Vulcan” drew out of the corner; “ Quite knocked up, I see—poor thing! Clinker, just let her lay her yed upo’ thy knee; I’m sure it looks too heavy for her t’ howd it up mich lunger.”

The smith placed his brawny hand tenderly upon the child’s shoulders; her eyes were lifted towards his face a moment and met a father’s smile, then with the confidence of one who knew what the expression meant, reclined her head upon the offered knee, and was soon oblivious of her situation, and all that was passing around her.

CHAPTER III.

THE eldest stranger, during the time occupied by Clinker's attentions to his charge, had seated himself upon the chair offered him by the joiner, and was gazing inquiringly round the company as if with a desire to ascertain their character and position in life. He was a short, well-set man, with whiskers that had recently been closely shaven, but which were now sharp and stiff, with an inclination to turning grey. A thick, ragged moustache, that had evidently once been more trim, frowned from his upper lip, which, with the restless wandering of his eyes, gave him an appearance not over-prepossessing. He spoke with a slightly foreign accent, but with the ease and confidence of a person well acquainted with the English tongue. What country, or what class of society, he belonged

to evidently engaged the speculations of those about him, but all seemed puzzled with the question. The landlord suggested to himself that he might be a French refugee; and the personal appearance of the stranger, coupled with the circumstances of the time, certainly favoured such a conjecture. That he was an object of special interest was apparent from the expression each countenance bore, and which led in due time to the pump being perseveringly applied to draw out the secret of his business in Irkdale.

“Fine neet, mesthur,” observed Jacob Robinson, endeavouring to open conversation betwixt himself and the new comer.

“Dusty,” was the laconic reply.

“Good weather for ripenin’ curn.”

“Yes.”

“Heaw dun things look on th’ road?”

“Well.”

“Dampert short,” thought Jacob, twisting round, and giving the table a nudge. “Let’s try him wi’ longer shot.”

“Han yo’ comm far?” he inquired, giv-

ing the other a sort of tell-me-all-about-it look.

“ Yes.”

“ Ten mile ? ”

“ More.”

“ Well, go to Jericho, then ! ” Jacob muttered, as he gave another twist and another shove at the table. “ Yo’re noa for tellin’ us nowt, I can see.”

“ Are things busy where yo’ comm fro’ ? ” put in Swinkey, seeing that his friend Jacob appeared to be shut up.

The stranger merely replied by a shake of the head.

“ Yo’n happen nowt t’ do wi’ trade ? ”

Another shake of the head.

These replies to Swinkey were about as satisfactory to the joiner as they would have been had they contained the whole life-history of the stranger ; and he threw his companion a grin so diabolically triumphant that the latter deemed it prudent to withdraw from the field at once.

Here the landlord, who had been absent about a minute, re-entered the kitchen, and

placed a well-filled measure of beer before the stranger.

“ Beg you pardon,” said the latter person, “ but I’d forgot. What is it ? ”

“ Ale,” replied the landlord.

“ The charge, I mean.”

“ To a neighbour, tuppence,—to yo’, nowt.”

“ But I insist upon paying,” said the stranger.

“ Keep yor brass i’ yor pocket ; it’ll help yo’ on th’ road,” entreated Boniface, with a wave of his hand that was meant to imply the other need make no further offer of payment.

“ You surely don’t take me to be a beggar ? ”

“ Yo’re a stranger,” said the landlord, “ na’ that’s enoogh. Nob’dy pays here ut’s on th’ tramp.”

The other gazed at his host a moment, with a look expressive of a mixture of pride and gratitude, then taking a handkerchief out of his hat, hid his face within its folds.

“I am poor, it is true, and tramping too, but not such a stranger as you may suppose,” he observed, replacing his handkerchief. “I have been unfortunate—”

Here he paused, and gave a tender glance at the child, whom the smith had lifted from her stool, and placed like one of his own upon his knee.

This simple expression was in itself sufficient to qualify the stranger for membership in the order of Nature’s “Free Masonry,” or such as it existed amongst the dwellers in Irkdale. It was a passport to their sympathies that required neither frank nor signature, nor test of official inquiry. He might be a Frenchman, a Spaniard, a native of the Sea Islands, or of the icy North,—no matter, he was “unfortunate,” and being so, had as strong a claim upon the hospitality of the “Jolly Jumper” as if he had been christened at the little church that each Sabbath day made a common family of the whole village. Even “King Saul,” erect, stately, majestical as the greatest of the Cæsars, bent himself

from his throne with an expression in his manner that seemed to say, “ You are welcome as a subject in my adopted kingdom.”

A generous nature, on being suddenly attacked, is for the moment indifferent about the mode of its manifestation. On this principle the company of the “ Jolly Jumper” acted towards their new acquaintance. A dozen pots of ale were simultaneously offered for his acceptance, as though it was regarded as one condition of misfortune to be extremely thirsty. It would have been all the same to them had they been offering the most expensive wine ever stored in cellar. Similar impulses are expressed every day in the little intercourses of humble life. A “ sup ” of drink ; a handful of meal for porridge ; a penny towards a bed—these are acts of mercy that, where the lowly mingle together, flow from hand to hand in little undercurrents of helping love—rising not to the upper world’s light, nor seeking to be made known through printed columns, which in too many instances reveal

the extent of the donor's wealth more than the kindness of his heart.

It was very natural on the part of the stranger to decline accepting such an exuberant token of the feeling his apparent distress had awakened in the company. He must have been well seasoned in dissipation who could imbibe such large potations of even "spigot milk," without feeling considerably damaged by their implied favours. He "thanked them all the same," however, and begged they would not suppose he had wittingly paraded his circumstances before them for the purpose of eliciting their sympathy or assistance. He had arrived from France within the last few days—France—his adopted, but not his native country, and was come to seek a temporary asylum in a land where hospitality to the world's unfortunates was never known to be denied, and where he expected help, though most of those whom he once held dear were sleeping in their graves.

"Gie me yor hont, mesthur, if yo' winno sup," said Jacob Robinson, crossing the floor, and holding out his hand to the other's grasp. "Yo'n bin progressin', knockin' one king of his peearch for t' put another on; same as we dun here, when we sheawtn a bad gover'ment deawn, and putn a woss in its place."

"A king for a republic," interposed the stranger, somewhat warmly.

"Well, it's the same thing. Yo'n see it'll end i' folk jowin' ther yeds t'gether till they'n be fain o' quietness at any price; then somebody'll come an' slip a hawter reawnd ther necks, an' droive 'em like a lot o' cowts ut han' kicked and flaskert thersels eawt o' wynt. Mind if it isno' so."

"Possibly," the other admitted.

"Neaw, look at his Majesty here," continued the joiner, waving his hand towards "King Saul;" he're th' king o'th Gallithumpeans onct, that's a nation somewhere, he says, between th' North pole an' th' Cape o' Good Hope. Well, they geet a lot o' new fangelt notions i' ther yeds; they'rн for

levellin' everybody an' everythin'; an' th' fust thing they did they sent his Majesty a gonnor-huntin', then fowten one amung another which must be th' topmost, an' thoose ut wur put in for t' *level*, devided things same-as th' monkey did th' cheese, till they'rн abeawt as level as a pair o' stairs. Well, at last, th' captain of a strange ship coom, an' leet some peawther fly amung 'em, an' when he'd peppered 'em weel, and kilt a lot o' th' great uns, th' tothers licked his cawves an' made him into a bran-new emperor. Did nor they, yor Majesty?"

The ex-king bowed.

"But France would never submit to such a fate," said the stranger, smiling, and regarding the deposed monarch with somewhat of a perplexed look. "It may become the victim of domestic tyranny, but would have to be wasted by centuries of revolution before bowing to the yoke of an invader."

"I dunno know that," replied Jacob, with a grin that told he had a point in hand. "Ther's a chap gone eawt o' Lunnon, neaw,

ut'll thresh a' France wi' his knob-stick. Mind if he does no'. They'n nowt t' do but get a painted monkey, an' set it on a pow, then kessun it Bonypart, an yo'n see ut Frenchmen 'll goo as mad after it as a lot o' thrail-dogs after a stinkin' rag."

" You speak as if you took *me* to be a Frenchman," said the stranger, turning to Jacob, and smiling as if forgetful of his situation.

" Well, sartinly I did," replied the other ; " but I may be mistakken."

" You are mistaken, my dear friend," said the stranger, his cheek flushing under the influence of a momentary feeling of pride. " I am no Frenchman, as I said before, but an Englishman ; and what is more, as thoroughly Lancashire as any of you. I was born within five miles of this village, and was brought up like some of you have been, to the loom. I was married"—here he paused, while a cloud passed over his face, and he tasted for the first time of the ale that had been set before him. " That child," he resumed, " was cradled with-

in the sound of your bells ; and if she had never left her first home, her future might not have been so dark and cheerless as it now appears.”

The company glanced towards the child, then at each other, and appeared by their looks instinctively to divine something in connection with the stranger’s history that increased the interest they felt in him. No one had been missed from the immediate neighbourhood for several years past, so that the stranger could not, they thought, have been a native of Irkdale. But there were villages about whose populations were more migratory, and he might be from one of them. Jacob remembered several people who had “emigrated” to Macclesfield during a slack time, but no one that he knew of had ever left the country. There was a young man disappeared from “Kitty Green” soon after the “plug” riots of ’42, but he was a *single* man, and not likely to have taken a child with him ; besides, he had been heard of often as a worm doctor practising in a neighbouring town, and adver-

tising his profession from the top of a tub in the market-place.* The stranger must have had a wife, if he did not possess one at present, for judging from the personal likeness of the two, the child was evidently his daughter. Had he a wife at that time, was a question that Jacob was then turning over in his mind with a most gossip-like eagerness. Glancing at the child again with a look indicative of much unfeigned sympathy—and in that mood the joiner's countenance smoothed down its ruggedness into a mild and open expression—

* This person is the one referred to in the following extract from a song commemorative of the great "strike" of 1842.

"For Doctor K —
Had come that way
From Ashton, Hyde, and Denton,
Who said that troops
Of Feargus' dupes
Were being led up by Fenton ;
And that they meant
Where'er they went
The "strike" flame to rekindle,
Till from Oldham Edge
To Stalybridge,
They'd stopp'd both loom and spindle."

he timidly inquired, as if afraid of the tenor of the answer—

“ Has hoo* a mother ? ”

The stranger shook his head and sighed.

“ Poor wench ! ” the joiner exclaimed, “ betther lose fifty feythers nor one mother. I know it by mysel’. I had t’ beg for pap off anybody ut ud lemme have it, an’ afore I could tell ’em what I wanted too.”

“ Did your mother die so early ? ” inquired the stranger.

“ I’re born beawt mother,” replied Jacob, without the least shadow of a smile betraying any intention to perpetrate a joke.

“ How could that be ? ” said the other.

“ Well, I never knew her, an’ that’s th’ same thing,” replied Jacob, looking as profound as if he had been uttering the most earnest truth. “ If we’n never felt her trottin’ us on her knee, or drawin’ us close to her breast, nor yerd her singin’ when we’n bin dreeamin’ we belungt to another woald or summut ; if we remember nowt nobbut a lot

* Hoo, *she* ; hence hoo’d, *she’d* ; hoo’ll, *she’ll*.

o' spoons an' bottle necks bein' cromm'd i' one's meawth till we'rн ready for bein' tosst upo' th' woald's middin fort' scrat for ussel, we'n never had a mother."

"But how if you'd lost her before she was dead?" observed the stranger.

"Oh, I conno' say; I never knew nowt o' that sort. Heaw cont' mak' that eawt, Clinker?"

The smith coughed, and put on a half-grave, half-comical look.

"Han yo' forgotten heaw Donny at Hicks lost his wife?" he said, glancing at Jacob.

"Hoo wurno a *mother*," the joiner remarked: "but it wur a queer case, for a' that," and his face suddenly became the vehicle of a huge but solemn grin.

"How might it be?" inquired the stranger, manifesting an eagerness to hear the story from the probability of its bearing some affinity to his own history.

"I'll tell yo, if yo'n hearken," said Vulcan, raising himself in his chair, and taking a long breath, as if making preparations for

telling a story of some length ; then taking hold of the poker to assist him in his task, he commenced, relating the history of

DONNY AT HICKS WIFE'S BURYIN'.*

“ Well, yo mun know,” the smith began, “ ut Donny at Hicks had a wife with a tongue in her yed ut wur like summut between a rasp an’ a pair o’ pincers ; it ud ha’ scrat or poo’d th’ skin off anybody hoo’d comn nee in abeawt two strokes. It wur a plague to everybody i’ Irkdale, for it wur awlus gooin’ like a steeam saw, an’ fairly cut chips eawt o’ folk. Yo may think heaw Donny wur poo’d i’ pieces wi’ this fleighin’ machine, an’ heaw he’re like a mon ut had lost t’one hawve of hissel afore he’d bin wed above three months. It didno’ matter wheere they wur, hoo’d be naggin’ at him a’ th’ time they’rn t’gether. If they’d bin at ther looms, hoo’d ha’ made a noyse above th’ seawnd o’ the shuttles ; an’ if they’d bin at ther meals hoo’d ha’ spit foyer between every meawthful. As for goin’ t’ church t’gether, that they never did nobbut

* Funeral.

onct, an' Donny ust say ut if they'd knockt his neck eawt as he're gooin' into th' poorch, or stickt a booan in his throat, so as he could not ha' said *I will*, it ud ha' bin as great a piece o' salvation as ever could ha' comm to him o' this side his coffin. He could nor do reet for her chus what he did. If he'd bin a double refoint hangel, wi' muslin wings, hoo'd a said he're as black as th' Owd Lad, an' as ill-favvert as Skennin' Billy, ut folk sed wur punct' t'gether.

“Donny coom to me one day i' th' smithy, an' I're just filin deawn a bridle-bit for owd Jone o' Robins' hoss Smiler. He sed, ‘Clinker, dost think theaw could mak' summut o' that sort for yon tit o' mine?’

“‘What tit?’ I sed.

“‘Wheay, yon mangy-meawth'd un ut'll noather draw nor let nob'dy else quietly,’ an' he winked at me abeawt as lively a wink as a chap met give ut had just gotten a rope reawnd his neck.

“‘Theaw doesno' mean th' wife,—doesta?’ I sed.

“‘ Theaw’s hit th’ reet eend o’th’ hoynr,* this time,’ he sed ; an’ he favvert he wisht I’d had her screwed up i’ th’ vice just then, an’ agate o’ operatin’ between her teeth.

“‘ I’ll tell thi what,’ I sed, ‘ theaw should have a sheeath made for her tongue. That ud be betther nor a bit.’

“‘ A sheeath ! what’s that ?’ he sed.

“‘ It’s a case,’ I sed, ‘ same as they put’n swords in fort’ keep ’em fro’ cuttin’ their legs.’

“‘ Oh,’ he sed, ‘ summut like a razzer-box, or owd Tweedle specteckle case. By th’ makkers, that ud just be it, Clinker. Dost think theaw could mak’ summut o’ th’ sort.’

“‘ Ay,’ I sed, ‘ in about fourteen or fifteen jiffies ; an’ I’ll do’t, if theaw’s a mind.’

“‘ Well, owd Jone con wait,’ he sed ; ‘ so get thee a piece o’ hoynr in a minit, an’ I’ll blow for thee.’

“ Well, I geet a piece o’ sheet hoynr, an’ stickt it i’ th’ foyer, an’ Donny set to th’ ballies an’ blew till I thowt he’d ha’ blown a’ th’ smithy up th’ chimdy. When it wur

* Iron.

red I just doublet it o'er upo' th' onvil, an' made it summut like a arrow tip for a giant, an' when I'd filed it deawn till it wur as breet as a new candlestick, Donny ran whoam with it fort' try heaw it ud fit th' wife's tongue. Heaw he went on wi' th' experiment yo'st yer e'ennew.

"Th' mornin' after, I'd just gotten' th' shutters deawn, an' the foyer laid, when Donny coom snakin' into th' smithy as quiet as a meawse, wi' his yed lapt up, an' pooin' a face abeawt th' length o' mi' arm. I could see he'd bin havin' the worst o' summut. 'What's up neaw, Donny?' I sed.

"'That sheeath,' he grooant, like someb'dy ut's gotten' th' tooth-wartch up an' deawn 'em.

"'Would nor it fit?' I sed.

"'Fit, be hanged!' he sed; 'I'd no sooner showed it to th' wife, an' towd her it wur a peeace offerin' for her, than hoo snigged it eawt o' my hont, an' leet it fly i' my face as theaw sees. It's knockt t'one e'ebree off, an' damaged th' corner o' my yed just same as if

it had bin cut wi' a knife. Neaw hoo's gone to a magistrate for t' swear her life agen me ; so th' next thing I reckon I'st ha' t' go to th' New Bailey for makkin' use of a new invention before it wur patented.'

" Well, I thowt th' mon wur in a gradely fix, an' I towd him ut th' best thing he could do ud be for t' dee eawt o' th' road ; for he'd never ha' no quietness as lung as they'rн t'gether.

" ' I wish *hoo'd* tak' it int' her yed for t' dee,' he sed, ' I'd have a fiddle at th' buryin', and I'd sing—

‘ Fairly, squarely, gradely shut *on* her
Deawn in a hole wi' a stone at th' top on her.’

" Well, it coom abeawt ut i'stead o' Donny wife gooin' to a magistrate, hoo went to her feyther's, somewhere no far off Manchester ; an' hoo coom noane back that day, nor that neet ; an' th' week went o'er an' nowt wur seen *on* her i' Irkdale. Donny geet flesh that week, an' he sed ut if hoo'd nobbut tarry e'endway, he'd be gettin' as fat as owd Joe Skooals.

“One neet, him an’ me, an’ Jacob theere, an’ one or two moore beside, wur havin’ a pint or two together, an’ we persuaded Donny for t’ bury th’ wife while hoo’re wick. Jacob sed he’d mak’ th’ coffin for nowt, an’ Donny must goo to Doctor Hollant an’ get a certifikit ‘ut hoo’d dee’d o’ th’ *Bridle feyver*. I knew th’ owd doctor ’ud like th’ joke as weel as anybody, when he geet to know th’ meeanin’ on’t.

“Se it wur made up directly, an’ Donny went to th’ doctor th’ day after, an’ towd him his arrand.

“‘What’s hoo dee’d on, dost say?’ th’ doctor axt him.

“‘Th’ bridle feyver,’ Donny sed.

“‘Hum?’ th’ doctor sed, ‘that’s a disorder unknown to a’ th’ pharmacopy. What are th’ symptoms?’

“‘A brakin’ eawt abeawt th’ meawth, an’ a rattlin’ noyse abeawt th’ top of her throat,’ Donny sed.

“‘Ay, thoose are bad signs, sartinly,’ th’ doctor sed. ‘Heaw leets theaw never ca’d on me in?’

“ ‘ Well,’ Donny sed, ‘ they sen ut a’th physic i’ th’ woald could no’ ha cured her. Beside, it’s a very catchin’ sort of a disorder, an I knew we could no’ weel spare yo’ yet.’

“ ‘ Very weel thowt,’ th’ doctor sed, ‘ it shows I’m o’ some use i’ th’ neighbourhood ; but I shall beliket’ see her, theaw knows.’

“ ‘ Could nor yo’ manage beawt ? ’ Donny sed. ‘ I’m feeart hoo’d be comin t’ life agen if yo’ felt her pulse.’

“ Th’ doctor lookt very fawse at Donny, an’ at th’ last he said,—‘ Young mon, I think theawrt humbuggin’ me abeawt this bridle feyver, an’ this brakin’ eawt abeawt th’ meawth, an’ this rattlin’ noyse at th’ top of her throat. Had hoo a tongue in her yed ? ’

“ ‘ Ay,’ Donny sed ! ‘ it’s that what’s kilt her. It made words faster nor hoo could spit ‘em eawt ; so hoo had t’ swallow ‘em, an’ they’n choked her.’

“ Th’ doctor set his meawth for swarin’, for he’re an owd rip betimes ; but e’enneaw he turnt his tongue reawnd, an’ seet up a crack o’ laafin’ leawd enoogh for a jack-ass.

“‘ Neaw it’s just here,’ Donny sed. ‘ Th’ wife has bin’ laft me a fortni’t, an’ we’n made it up for t’ have a buryin’ ; or else, hoo’s as wiek just neaw as abeawt twenty folk.’

“‘ Oh, I see,’ th’ doctor sed, ‘ a sham buryin’. Well, theawst have a certifikit, an’ I’ll be a bowl o’ punch toart th’ buryin’ drink.’

“ So Donny geet his papper, an’ things wur gettn’ ready for th’ buryin’. Jacob theere made a white wood coffin, an’ filled it wi’ garden soil, for t’ weight it a bit, an’ then it wur put on a chamber dur, an’ laid eawt upo’ th’ bed. When folk wanted t’ know heaw it wur ut hoo’re screwed deawn so soon, Donny towd ’em ut th’ corpse wur no’ fit t’ be seen. Beside it smelt so, an’ th’ doctor had ordert ut nob’dy must see her. He’d hard wark fort’ get th’ heawse cleant up agen th’ buryin’-day ; folk wur so feeart o’ catchin’ th’ bridle feyver ; bo at last he set it eawt ut he meeant have another wife as soon as th’ tother wur gettn’ dacently i’ th’ greawnd ; an’ th’ next news we yerd ther two young widows

slushin an' moppin th' heawse, an' fa'in eawt wi' one another like two berm wimmen.

" Well, th' buryin' day coom, and th' church bell towlt th' same as for a gradely deead un ; an' Donny had gotten hissel don'd up in a bran-new suit o' clooas, ut he'd gotten off th' Bury felly ;* an' th' two young widows wurn knockin' abeawt as fine as rush-cart hosses, an' settin' ther caps at Donny till I believe th' mon actily thowt th' wife wur as deead as a dur nail. A' th' folk i' Irkdale wur laitht† to th' buryin', an' ther two heawseful coom, lookin' as sollit an' as concarned as if they'd a' bin relations, an' wur expectin' hoo'd left em summit beside her

* A well-known travelling *Scotchman* from the neighbourhood of Bury, Lancashire. It is related of this individual that such was his faith in his customers that at one time there was scarcely a family in a certain village near Manchester who were not in his books. Times were bad, and his visits became so unpleasant to those who could not pay, that a boy was employed to watch for his coming ; and at a concerted signal (the firing of a pistol) nearly every door in the village was locked.

† Laitht—invited.

blessin' ; for ther nob'dy i' th' sacret nobbut abeawt a hawve a dozen on us. Donny tried t' squeeze a bit of a tear eawt o'th corner o' one e'e when owd Betty Beawncer axt him if th' wife wur owt like what hoo wur when hoo're wick ; bo when he fund it eawt ut he hadno' weet enough for t' mak one, he gan it up, an' yeawlt a bit for dacency's sake. Owd Johnny o' Sammuls wur theere, wi' a hymn-book in his hont ut had a great big hoyrn clasp to it ; an' when he dropt his chin like th' bottom of a pair o' smithy ballies, an' wanted t' know if they mut sing o'er her, I thowt Donny ud ha' gone int' fits wi' tryin' t' howd for laafin'.

“ Well, when they'd gettn th' coffin deawn th' stairs, an' just as th' chaps wurn messurin' for carriers, an' th' owd wimmen wurn puttin' on their pattens, an' tuckin' up their clooas for gooin, th' dur flew oppen, an' in Donny wife marcht, as wick, as he sed, as abeawt twenty folk. I thowt th' heawse ud ha' tumblt abeawt eawr ears wi' th' hallabaloo ut wur raised in abeawt a hauve a second. Th'

wimmen seet up a skrike as leawd as if Owd Sooty had popt his hurns in at th' dur, an' prick't 'em wi' his toastin-fork. Th' men seet up a sheawt of another sort, an' capert upo' th' floor same as if they'd bin at th' height of a wakes fuddle.

“Donny wife stood abeawt a minit like a cat ut's a lot o' moice afore its nose, an' does no' know which *on* 'em for t' tackle. At last hoo flew at Donny, an' tore his dicky eawt of his breast, an' gan his yure sich a curlin', ut he believt it ud never stretch agen. Then hoo lookt reawnd for th' finest cap ut hoo could find, an' seet at that, an' made doll-rags on't afore anybody could ha' whistlet. Hoo cleart th' heawse as soon as a foyer would, for nob'dy dost touch her, an' when they'd a' gone, hoo jump't upo' th' coffin an' smash't it int' foyer-wood at two jumps, an' then slat o' th' buryin' drink i' th' fowt, th' doctor's punch an' a'—what ther wur laft.

“Th' news ut hoo'd comm to life agen flew up an' deawn like war news, or a bit o' nice cleean scandal, an' folk ut had lookt concarn-

ed abeawt her deein, sed what a pity it wur ut hoo'd turnt up agen, for Donny could noa-ther draw th' buryin'-brass eawt o' th' club, nor get wed to another, as he'd th' chance o' dooin'. Th' owd pa'son wur some pottert when he fund he'd ordert a grave oppent, an' kept th' bell towlin' a' day for nowt; but when it wor explaint to him he gan a good hearty shake of his waistcoat, an' set th' bells o' ringin' *Hie the Jenny whoam agen*, till everybody i' Irkdale wur as merry as if ther'd bin abeawt fifty weddings an' as monny kessun-ins a' at onct. Ther wur some laafin' abeawt th' skit for monny a day after, an' if ever anybody catcht the bridle fever they must ha' bin curet afore it had gone too far, for I never yerd of any more deeaths. As for Donny wife, —after hoo'd smasht th' coffin, and slat th' drink abeawt, hoo packt up her clooas i' three bonnet boxes an' a trunk, and never nowts bin yerd on her sin."

CHAPTER IV.

THOUGH the merriment which followed the recital of Clinker's story was sufficient to have lightened an ordinary weight of care, it produced little of that effect upon the stranger. He had listened attentively, however, and now and then a faint smile would flit over his face as the more ludicrous incidents of the story were touched upon, but nothing that would indicate the slightest abandonment of a decorous and self imposed restraint could be observed in his manner. The smith appeared to feel some reproof from this reserve, as if he thought his story had been somewhat ill-timed or out of place, for he dropped his chin upon his breast, put on a confused look, and took more than usual interest in the construction of the poker. It was evident he had touched a chord in the stranger's breast that awoke troubled memories,

for during several minutes the latter appeared to be wrapt in deep thought, from which abstraction even the jocularity of Swinkey and his companion Pothook failed to arouse him. He started up at last, however, and, looking at the clock, which pointed to within two hours of Sunday morning, exclaimed—

“ Dear me, how late it’s getting! and we’ve some miles to go yet.”

“ Yo’n stir noane fro here this neet,” said the landlord, in a manner that seemed to have the effect of locking and double-barring every door about the house.

“ But we must,” insisted the other, looking tenderly at the sleeping child, as if it occurred to him how cruel it was thus to have delayed their journey until midnight would be likely to overtake them ere it was finished. “ We have to go to Waverlow to-night.” A friend there offers me a home until such times as I can either settle in this country, or be enabled to return to France.”

“ If yo’ go’n to Waverlow t’neet,” observed Jacob Robinson, with an air of authority

that meant not to be questioned, “ Yo’n ha’ t’ goo by yorsel, for that wench goes noane with yo,’ I can tell yo.”

“ What do you mean, friend ? ” asked the stranger, again dropping upon his seat, and appearing extremely puzzled to account for such rude manifestations of hospitality.

“ I meeān,” replied Jacob, “ ut it ud be a—, I’d liket t’ ha’ sworn—it ud be a double plankt an’ dove-tailt shawni for t’ drag thoose little feet o’er yon broos an’ hard roads at this time o’th’ neet ; so yo’ shanno do it. We’n a little nice crib at eawr heawse ut’s as sweet as a posy, an’ I’ll carry her to it mysel’, same as I’ve carried one monny a time ut if hoo’d ha’ livt ud neaw ha’ bin like one o’ thoose poppilaries (poplars) at th’ front theere.”

“ But—”

“ Nay, yo’ shanno’ say *nawe* ; for anybody ut says that when Jacob Robi’son says *ay*, met as weel hit him a cleawt i’th’ earhole at onct.”

To have reasoned with the joiner after this declaration of his obstinacy, the stranger con-

cluded, would be useless, and as the window appeared to be streaked with drops of rain, he determined at once to give himself up to the hospitable coercion of his friends. He therefore intimated his willingness to place his daughter under Jacob's care, and to accept the implied offer of a night's shelter for himself beneath the roof of the "Jolly Jumper."

"I am sure," said he, "you overwhelm me with your kindness, for which I must own myself indebted till such time as I can recompense you."

"Say nowt abeawt that," exclaimed the landlord. "If th' Jumper connot afford a neet's peearchin' beawt makkin' it int' a pocket question, I'll poo him deawn, an' stick him at th' back o' th' foyer, for a piece o' arrant lumber."

"An' if eawr Nanny," said the joiner, striking the table, "doesno' behave like an owd hen to that chicken, I'll ruffle her fithers wi' th' soft eend o' my arm. But then I know hoo will; so I may say owt."

It was settled without further preliminaries

that the stranger was to be the guest of mine host—not the customer—but in every sense of the term, guest; and that Jacob Robinson was to be nurse, guardian, or father to the little girl for at least one night, and as much of the following day as the duties of hospitality required; an arrangement which appeared to give every satisfaction to all who were concerned.

The landlord here intimated that “ear-rings” were getting more numerous on the window panes than were usual in fine weather, and that in all probability a shower was coming on. Those of the company who did not care for a good wetting might stay another hour, and get drenched both inside and out; but for such as preferred a dry skin and clean clothes, the sooner they “slung their clogs” homewards the better. His corns had been “springin’” most painfully for some time, and from the sympathy they had with the weather office, he could always foretell when the “deggin’ can”* was going to

* Watering pot.

be used. His advice was, “ Goo whoam, an’ be slippy, an’ yo’n feel no wurr o’ Sunday mornin.”

This was the signal for the general rising of the company, with the exception of Pothook, who said he had “tuppence” left, and maintained that it would be a piece of foolishness, besides looking cowardly, to go home and leave such good doings while he had a farthing in his pocket, and all for the sake of a “sope o’ rain.”

Leaving the latter person to the enjoyment of his “last pint,” and also to the agreeable satisfaction of having arrived at a state of complete bankruptcy, Swinkey reloaded his pocket pistol (meaning his pipe), and taking up a napkin from which protruded the knuckle of a joint intended for stew* in the

* “Stew,” or *shin of beef soup*, is to Lancashire working men a favourite Sunday morning repast. People have been known to go miles to visit each other as early as six o’clock in the morning, when it has been known that a good knuckle has been stewing in the oven during the previous night; and no epicure could be more delighted with a rare dish, than would

morning, he bade his companion “good neet,” then favouring him with an injunction to mind that nobody “took his brass o'er gooin' whoam,” rattled his clogs over the floor, and took his departure, in company with “Robin-th'-keaw-mon” and “King Saul,” who were going the same way. The smith gave up his charge to her parent, who on awakening her from the sweet slumber which she had enjoyed, inquired if she would like to accompany her new-found grandpapa home.

The child opened her eyes with a start, gave a bewildered glance round the apartment, then took her father's hand with confiding resignation, as if she had been accustomed to, and was prepared for, further long wandering in search of that home which had for several days floated like a meteor before her eager imagination.

“How far is home, Pa?” said the child, dreamingly tying on a little bonnet which had been loosened while she slept.

these homely people with the wholesome flavour of a “gradely Lancashire stew.”

“ Not far, love,” the parent replied.

“ It hasn’t been for many a day,” said the child, with a yearning weariness in her tone of voice.

“ But we shall reach it to-morrow.”

“ And shall we see Ma there ? ”

The stranger was some time before he could answer; but suppressing an emotion which was well-nigh overpowering him, said he did not think they would *yet*; but Grandpapa and Grandmamma would be there, and they would be so happy.

The child, without further questioning as to her destination, or a murmur at their separation, yielded herself up to the civilities of Jacob Robinson, who looked like a melting ogre as he stood there, from a couple of big round tears that were watering the channels on each side of his nose, and threatening his beard with a similar inundation.

“ Come, an’ goo wi’ Grondad,” said the joiner, taking his charge by the hand more tenderly than he would have done the throat of any one who might choose to molest them,

“ an’ we’n get posies i’ th’ mornin’, an’ watch hummabees, an’ feed chucky-hens, an—I dunno know what.”

Alas! this was Greek to the poor girl, whose childhood had hitherto been without flowers, without bees, and who had seen no “chucky-hens” only such as had been cooped up for sale in the markets of Lyons.

“ Yo’n come an’ have yor porritch wi’ us i’ th’ morning, if owd Johnny ’ll let yo,” he continued, directing his discourse to the stranger, who was taking an affectionate leave of his daughter, “ an’ yo’ mun stop to th’ *service*, too.”

“ To service? ” said the other, somewhat puzzled to comprehend what the joiner meant by the word as then applied.

“ Ay, to *service*, ” repeated Jacob, “ I praich to my owd womman an’ eawr Dick every Sunday mornin’; an’ if my church has not a steeple o’th’ top on’t, nor bells for t’ ring us t’gether, we’n mooar nor Christ had when he went i’ th’ wilderness telling folk to *do to others*, an’ *love one another*, as we readn

on i' th' owd book. Yo'n come, winno yo'?"

"I will," said the stranger.

"Then, good neet! Come, my little meawsy-peawsy! Clinker, stick to her tother hont; an' if th' rain 'll nobbut keep off a bit, we'st get whoam beawt havin' a fither turnt, or a spot o' durt abeawt us. Good neet!"

"Good night, Pa, and God bless you!"

"Good night, love,—good night!" and under the escort of the stalwart blacksmith, Jacob Robinson, leading his charge, left the glowing kitchen of the "Jolly Jumper," and was soon struggling with the darkness on his way home.

CHAPTER V.

SUNDAY morning ! Sweetly floated the sound of bells over Irkdale ; sweetly wafted gentle breezes over meadows and through rustling woods ; sweetly hummed the bees in gardens and warm sunny nooks, where flowers yet lingered, and sweetly the thrush poured its matin hymn from the branches upon which he had sung all Summer time. The morn was inviting all nature to worship. The fields and hedges appeared to be newly washed and trimmed, and dressed in their holiday attire. The river that “ went on its way rejoicing,” tuned its carols to the low sweet song which the spirit of the valley seemed to be murmuring in fairy syllablings. The rain that had fallen in gentle showers the night before had formed thousands of mirrors in tiny pools and clustering hedgerows that

made even the sunshine more glad, and the grass and herbage—green as a fresh salad—lay not in twisted “elf-locks,” but straight and glossy as the hair of the little children who toddled that morning down the field-paths to school. The cattle lowed or slept on sunny banks, as if they, too, had been apprized of its being Sabbath, and joined in the worship, or drank in the harmonies of that hallowed time; and human worshippers, as if lacking some of the instinct which stirred all nature to the adoration of God’s glory, put on forms of sanctity that were in outward accordance with Sabbath rites and the keeping holy of the day, as it was ordained to be kept. The thrifty villager, to prove that he was not a worldling in every sense, prepared himself to air his Sunday coat in the house of prayer, and court salvation with seeming earnestness of supplication. For this purpose he hath walked staidly from his cottage door—erect with the consciousness of one who deemed the world would be no worse from a show of piety, though only on the seventh day

assumed. Even he who at times regards with levity the laws of Sabbath keeping, hath now divided his care for this world and the next, by strolling thoughtfully among the meadows, and now and then lifting his eyes to Heaven, as if he felt some tone of the divine spirit stealing like an unknown melody into his being.

The face of earth was strewn with living and inanimate beauty. Lanes were twinkling with the smiles of rosy youth, as fields and woods were with nature's brightest looks. Fluttering with heyday blood and the religion of the young heart's love, the maiden of ripening summers steals like a gleam of sunshine into the shadow of the church porch, whilst lesser yeanlings from Christ's fold trip more lightly over the grass, and press each tombstone with so gentle a step that, if the dead could hear and feel, would make the grave a place in which more than the weariest would seek repose. Apart from the rest, but in harmony with the scene, earth seemed to have made a posy of a sweet group of little folks

who stood aside as if arrested by some hidden power that wished to show the gaudily-arrayed how beautiful was simplicity ; and the richly-appointed carriage swept past with a dimmed lustre on its bearings, from contrast with that garland of fresh and innocent childhood.

Jacob Robinson had risen early on this Sabbath morning, as indeed was his wont on other days, even in the depth of winter ; for odd and capricious as was our friend in general things, no one loved nature more than he ; and as he opened his casement to admit the sweet breath of morning, and beheld the sun making seraph's wings of the light mist which lingered in the valley, if his lips did not utter, “**GLORY BE TO GOD, THE CREATOR OF ALL THINGS,**” his heart throbbed with its own devotion, and sent up its praise to the throne of the Most High.

As for the rest of the house, they were still sleeping. His spouse Nanny would have an hour or two yet, and Dick would sleep till dinner time, “or till th’ sun brunt him eawt,” as his father would say, if no one awakened

him. Jacob wondered how his little guest was faring ; and as soon as he had slipped on his knee-breeches, and drawn his lamb's wool over his calves, for in dress our friend was the model “old Englishman,” he betook himself to the room where the child was sleeping. How quiet and how beautiful she lay in that little nest, and how sleep seemed to be playing about her face—now moving her lips to smiles, then dancing upon the soft lashes of her eyes, as if it would emulate death, and entice her soul away to where “Angels ever bright and fair,” sang the eternal hymn of love.

Jacob gazed long and earnestly at the sleeping child, whilst strange thoughts and wishes flitted through his mind. Would it be possible, he wondered, that she could be allowed to remain with them—be his own little daughter growing up to womanhood beneath his care ? She was just the monitor he wanted, to soften and guide his stubborn nature ; for he felt that he had been hardened against many things, though his heart was

melting then, as it had often done, at the sight of loveliness. He felt charmed with the idea, and saw, as he fancied, in the future a living ornament to his old age in the tender shoot before him, loving him as would his own child, had she been living, and ministering with gentle care to his domestic wants. But what an outrage to the real father to rob him of such a treasure !

Whilst the joiner was thus communing with himself, the sleeper opened her eyes, gave an uneasy start, and looked wonderingly around at the strangeness of the place, and at the strange guardian that was bending over her. She had never seen that room before—never the little waxen doll that hung over the mantelpiece, nor the little cradle that stood on the shelf beside it ; nor had she till then beheld the flowers that clustered about the window, or the oaken chest, whose top was a very bazaar of curious but homely-looking toys. That was not *her* home—nor was it her parent that stood by the bedside, though he must be kind from the very loving look he

gave her; and the child's hope became stronger, and her fears more at rest, as the incidents of the previous night came to her recollection—of her being carried to bed, and a tender hand folding the bed-clothes about her, and the tones of that strange “good-night” that had mingled with the images of her sweetest dreams, and now haunted her waking moments.

Jacob felt embarrassed by this unexpected wakening of his guest. She ought to have slept longer after so tiresome a journey. But perhaps it was the strangeness of the lodgings that had stirred her so early; for he remembered that the only time he had ever slept from home, he might as well have stayed up all night, from any proper rest he obtained. The child was broad awake, that was certain, and appeared inclined for leaving her nest; but how could she dress without the assistance of his dame, who would, he was sure, be cross if disturbed at that early hour? An idea came to his deliverance. He would try to perform the duties of a mother or nurse him-

self in assisting the child with her toilet ; and with this purpose in view he ascertained the wishes of the latter as to whether she would get up, or stay where she was. The little one placed her hand in his, rose from her pillow, and the next moment her arms were clinging round his neck.

Our friend at once proceeded down-stairs with his charge, and the toilet was commenced in earnest. What a spectacle ! how ludicrous —how affecting ! the clumsy joiner passing his big rough hands through the glossy hair, and over the delicate face, and round the ivory shoulders of the child, uttering words of endearment the while, and she smiling through the bright “pink and white” that the gently-applied towel assisted in developing. Now the ablutions are over,—the dressing is performed after much fastening and unfastening of divers straps and buttons that would make their appearance in wrong places, as if they had been attached on purpose to puzzle him ; and when the child’s hair, which naturally clustered in raven curls, was adjusted,

and a huge piece of plum pasty had been placed in her hand, Jacob sallied out into the garden, followed by his little guest.

The two seated themselves upon a rude bench that stood beneath an apple-tree, and near which the bees were performing their morning's duties. There were flowers too about them, and Jacob looked with pride on the one beside him, as though he thought she eclipsed in beauty every flower since Eden, and he addressed quaint gallantries to her, such as old people may be supposed to invent wherewith to beguile the infancy of their grandchildren. Sometimes he would amuse her by seeming to chase a butterfly, but which he would suffer to escape through an assumed awkwardness in the pursuit; then he would pluck a flower and fix it in the child's hair, or bosom, making thereby quite a juvenile "*Ophelia*" of her; or he would peep beneath the gooseberry trees, to see if any remained of the late crop, and which, when found, he would pour into the lap of his little mistress. These gallant offices per-

formed, he would seat himself again on the bench, and indulge in some, to his listener, unintelligible observations on the beauties of nature, the science of bee-keeping, and the lessons to be derived from a study of the organic construction of plants. Finding the latter remarks did not appear to impress his pupil with any abstract ideas of botanical science, Jacob changed the subject to a discourse upon dolls, and apples, and lollipop ; and concluded his observations by shaking a tree from which dropped a delicious-looking “Kessick,” that was eagerly picked up by the little girl. Then Jacob bethought himself he would endeavour to elicit something relative to his guest’s history ; whither she came, what were her parents, and what their position in society. So after gazing at the child for some minutes, during which he was inwardly wondering how people could possibly be evilly disposed with such “pratty things as thoose abeawt ‘em,” he introduced his inquiries by the question—

“ What art coed ? ”

The girl looked up inquiringly, as if scarcely comprehending the meaning of the question put.

“ What’s thy name? ” said the joiner, a little more intelligibly.

“ Adelaide, ” replied the other.

“ Oh, Queen Adelaide.”

“ No, sir, Adelaide Wilson.”

“ Wilson, Adelaide Wilson? I wondhur, ” said the joiner to himself, “ whether hoo’s owt akin to th’ Wilsons i’ Moston, or owd Tummy Wilson, th’ praicher? But hoo happen does n o’know that.”

“ Wheere wur t’ born? ” he said aloud.

“ I don’t know, sir, ” was the reply.

“ What, noa know wheere theaw’re born? Dear me, heaw strange! ” and Jacob again spoke as if to himself, “ I know where I wur born; an, if I couldno remember that spot, so pratty as it looks to me neaw, an’ so monny yer sin’ I seed it, I shouldno care if I recollectd nowt. Poor wench, poor wench, doesno know her come-fro! Well, an’ what’s thy feyther’s name? ”

“ Pa’s name ? ” said the girl, hesitatingly.

“ Ay, *yes*,” Jacob blurted out, “ I mun talk a bite *fine*, I see.”

“ Pa’s name,” said the child, “ is Edward, Edward Wilson.”

“ I never knew no Neds among th’ Mos-ton Wilsons,” said Jacob, aside ; so hoo mun be of another stock. Well, an’ heaw—lung’s thy—thy—mam bin decead ? ” he said aloud, and with an effort to “ talk fine,” as he had expressed himself.

“ Ma isn’t *dead*,” replied the child.

“ Poorly—sick ? ”

“ Don’t know, sir.”

“ Why, where is hoo—*she*, I mean ? ”

“ Don’t know, sir.”

“ Han yo’ left her ? ”

“ No, sir ; she left us.”

“ Left yo’, did hoo ? ”

The child hung down her head, and when her interrogator stooped to see the cause of her silence, he saw that tears were streaming down her cheeks.

“ Oh, I see,” said the joiner, as if he

divined the whole history of the child's bereavement at one glance. "I've yerd o' sich things before, but never knew nowt o' th' sort i' Irkdale. We are no civilized enoogh here. This comes o' yor newspappers, an' yor railroads, an' yor gooin' abeawt to sae-sides. Oh, I know. Thank God I'm as they sen, fifty yer behind other folk. I wish I're a hundert, if that maks one betther; I do."

Jacob had risen from his seat, and was now pacing backwards and forwards in an agitated manner.

"Gone an' left that pink o'th' garden, is hoo? Heaw could a moather do it? What could hoo see i' fifty theawsunt foos an scamps that ud turn her yed fro' sich a blossom as this, an see no beauty in it for t' mak her stick like an owd broody hen ut winno be byetten off th' neest? Wheay, a pig would nor ha' done it. If I thowt yond owd sow o' mine ud forsake th' cote, an' leeave her young uns beawt pap,—I'd punse her dampert yed off i' two minits,—that I would. Neaw, then —God forgi'e me for swearin', an' o'th' good

Sunday too,—but I could nor help it—I could nor help it ! ” And Jacob bowed his head and paused, whilst his heart sent up its prayer for forgiveness of the oath that had so unwittingly escaped him. He looked at the child again, then over the hedge, and resumed his strong invective.

“ Unfeelin’ wratches ! Hosses, jackasses, keaws are fifty milliont times nar God than yo’ are, if ther actions are owt t’ goo by. Look at ’em yonder, lickin’ ther bits o’ yung uns o’er as if they’rn gooin’ t’ ate ’em at one meawthful. An’ thoose han no *souls*, noather. Eh, wimmen, wimmen ! if yor ways wur hawve as pratty as yorsels, what a rare woald we should have ! If that owd besom o’ mine ”—

He was prevented making further personal allusions to an unoffending member of his household by the appearance of a night-capped head thrusting itself through one of the bed-room windows, and a voice calling out—

“ Jacob, whatever art makkin’ that noyse abeawt, an someb’dy bin knockin’ at th’ dur

this hawve heawr? Go thy ways an' see whoa it is."

"Oh Nan, is that thee?" observed the joiner, casting an upward glance at the window just as the night-cap was retreating. "Ther'll summut happen if theaw gets up so soon." Then a soft whispering of the bells came upon his ear, and he stood listening until his soul was calmed, and the stern expression of his face had relaxed into one more be-tokening reconciliation with human nature, and a charitable view of its frailties: as if music could impart softness and gentleness to a disposition at war with humankind, and lead it to feelings and acts of love and mercy. No wonder that music has been regarded as the chief employment of angels, since it ministers to so angelic a purpose. But Jacob heard the knocking at the door, and judging it to proceed from the child's father on his promised visit, he sauntered into the house to receive him.

CHAPTER VI.

THE knocking at the door proceeded, as Jacob had supposed, from the stranger, whom he had invited the evening before to come and share the hospitality of the “Odd House.” This gentleman, whom we will now call Mr Wilson, had risen early to enjoy the beauty and freshness of the morning, notwithstanding the fatigue he felt from the previous day’s travel, and had been sniffing the sweet air of Irkdale for upwards of an hour. His appearance, as may be supposed, was much improved by a night’s rest, and other comforts to which the hospitable attentions of our host and hostess of the “Jolly Jumper” had mainly contributed. His features had less of that haggard look which had so impressed his entertainers on their first acquaintance, and the wild and nervous expression of his eyes

had given way to one more calm and fixed, as though he found himself settling down into a stiller life than had of late years been his lot. There was the slightest possible flush in his cheek that promised a more healthy habit, and his forehead appeared to have rid itself of much of its care-suggesting heaviness. His hair and moustache were more trim than we have hitherto observed of those embellishments, and his neckerchief was more carefully adjusted than he seemed to have cared about at another time. In short, Mr Wilson, if he had not changed his attire, had assumed quite a holiday tone in his personal bearing that contrasted favourably with what Jacob Robinson had hitherto seen of him, and the greeting between the two was as cordial as could be expected of strangers.

“ Little Addy,” as Jacob insisted upon calling the child, was as much improved in her appearance as was her father, and the latter could not help uttering an exclamation of astonishment, as the former, with all the bloom and freshness of the morning on her

checks, gave him her accustomed salute when she met him at the door.

“I’m fain yo’re comm,” said Jacob, giving the sulky fire a lift with a poker that would have made a Cockney stagger on beholding, for our friend was partial to good fires, and would place his back to one, Lancashire like, on the hottest day in summer. “It’s very nee my breakfast time, an’ bein’ Sunday, we’n put th’ porritch-dish upo’ th’ shelf, for one’s stomach is a bit halidayish as weel as onc’s sel’. Dun yo’ see nowt here?” he added, opening the oven door to the back, and exhibiting a round-bellied jar-shaped mug that was emitting a very agreeable odour. “If yo’ hanno forgotten th’ owd soil yo’ known what that is. Just smell, an’ if it doesno’ mak wayther t’ come i’ yor meawth I’m soory for yor inside.”

Mr Wilson smiled.

“You keep up the old custom, I see,” he observed, “broth on a Sunday. It was my old father’s favourite mess, as I well remember.”

“ *Broth!* ” exclaimed the joiner, with a feeling of contemptuous astonishment pictured in his countenance, and a slight bristling up of his short hair. “ Dun yo’ co that *broth* ? I reckon yo’n fed upo’ frog-pie till yo’n forgotten gradely English mayte. That’s a thumpin’ *stew*, I’ll have yo’ t’ know, abeawt th’ size o’th limb of an oak tree. Noane o’ yor wayther gruel theere, wi’ abeawt three or four stars on it, as if it wur t’ be a dark neet wi’ yor stomach. Nawe, nawe ; a mess o’ that between yor ribs ’ll quieten th’ grumbles for a clock-reawnd if yo’n nowt-else. Theere’s summut, too, ut’ll mak it feel like a whul buttery i’ yor meawth,” he continued, pointing to a “ *flake* ” or “ *fleigh* ,” well thatched with crisp-looking and nicely-browned oat-cakes, which curled over the strings that held them like a bishop’s hat brim inverted. “ Yo’n seen nowt o’ that sort i’ France, I’ll uphowd yo’. They’re owd Tummy Booth* bakin’, an’ as sweet an’ as neppy, they are, as ginsbred. Come, let’s see if eawr Dick’s gooin’ to mak a

* A noted baker of oat-cakes.

coffin of his bed, for it's time he're up. I should ha' t' draw him like a badger if he knew they're anybody strange i'th' heawse, for he's as shy at new faces as a brid at a curn-boggart, is yon lad."

With that, Jacob went to the foot of the stairs, and giving a kick at the bottom step that might have been intended to knock down the whole staircase, inquired in a tone that was a good accompaniment to the action, if his hopeful heir was about to "lift his shanks o'er th' bed-rail."

This inquiry was immediately followed by a loud bump on the chamber floor, accompanied by the apparently momentous question from above—"Is th' stew ready, feyther?"

"Ready, behanged!" replied the parent, winking at his elder guest, and chuckling with quiet glee, "Theaw'll happen be i' time for th' leeavins, if theaw'll be sharp! He'll be i'th stairs in a crack neaw he's yerd that, an' as soon back agen when he's seen you—mind if he isno. He's a queer lad. Dick's hatbant wur a foo to him. As merry as a

brid he is when he's by hissel ; but when anybody's with him he's as mopin' as an owd hen i' th' meawt."

The joiner had scarcely finished his observations on his son's odd temperament than Mr Wilson was startled by a waistcoat being flung down-stairs, followed by an inquiry from the top if the owner of the garment might be allowed to "don" it first thing. This request being granted without reservation, the youth, for it was Dick, commenced descending the stairs after a manner peculiarly his own ; a succession of bumps indicating to the listener that the process adopted was not of the speediest. Bump, bump, bump, however, until the bottom step was reached, which then discovered a fine ruddy-faced young fellow of about ten or eleven Summers, with a head so completely denuded of hair as almost to resemble a milliner's block. He was without stockings, and the waistband of his trousers was drawn up to within an inch of his armpits by very narrow straps of leather, which had to do the duty of braces. The youth was taken

by surprise on seeing there were strangers in the house, and the celerity with which he retreated to the top of the stairs showed that the slowness of his descent did not proceed from physical inability to move at a quicker pace.

“Theere neaw, I towd yo’,” observed Jacob, when his son had disappeared, “off like a shot th’ minnit he see’d yo’. He’d keawer up th’ stairs a’ day if I did no fotch him by th’ skuft o’ th’ neck; or he’d be makkin’ a’ sorts o’ marlacks wi’ th’ bedclooas an’ cheears an’ drawers—tumblin’ ‘em a’ of a rook like an owd goods shop. I’ve some hopes o’ that lad, I have; he’s as owd-fashint an’ as fause as a boggart, an’ sticks to owd things an’ owd sorts, same as if he’re a’ teeth. King Saul comes a neet or two a week for t’ put him into figurin’ a bit, for I’ve bin an owd thickyed ut slate larnin’ mysel, an’ I meeans t’ have him summat different. Saul, yo seen, is one o’th’ owd sort, too, an’ no’ likely t’ put any new-fanglet notions i’th’ lad’s yed, same as these bits o’ spreats o’ skoo-

mesthers done neaw o' days. If he does no' mak a foo o' new books an' ways o' thinkin', I'll hang him in a dog-collar afore he bruits his beeart."

"But what makes him so shy?" Mr Wilson inquired.

"Oh," replied Jacob, "it's his avarsion to owt uts strange, or ut he hasno seen th' like on before. If yo'd had a white appern on, and a pair o' clogs, an' a pipe i' yo'r meawth, he happen wouldno' ha' ta'en th' boggart at yo so soon, for th' lad sees nowt mich beside, but just as mich as I want him t' do. Never hardly goes eawt o' th' Hollow, nobbut when he goes a bearin' whoam for his mother to th' wareheawse i' Manchester; an' that he'll hardly do if he con get her t' goo in his place. It's i'th' family on us, I reckon, for his gronfeyther, Owd Square-yed, as they co'ed him, wur th' same. He're an owd Jacobin, wur my feyther, an' cusst church an' king as lung as he'd wynt, an' sheawted for Tum Paine till he're throttlet off it."

"My father held a similar faith," observed

Mr Wilson, “and would have bequeathed his creed to his son, along with a beggar’s heritage, had I not learned to think and judge for myself.”

“Ay, ay,—so it wur wi’ me,” said the joiner, shaking his head and looking thoughtfully at the fire. “But he could no mak me quite as savage as he wur. I’d getten a bit of an inklin’ i’ my yed ut ther summut beside this woald for us ; but what it wur, or heaw we must get at it, bothert me above a little.”

“And in that case you appealed to your Bible, which would inform you.”

“Ay, well, I did sometimes, as I do yet, moander abeawt i’t’ *owd book* till I welly geet eawt o’ concait wi’ folk, they favvert bein’ so mich different to what they should be ; an’ thoose too ut coen thersels gradely up to th’ mark i’ religion, wi’ texts o’ Scriptyer i’ ther meawths ut they con shoot eawt as readily as paes eawt of a kex. I see ‘em layin’ ther religion by wi’ ther Sunday clooas, boxed up nicely wi’ neps for t’ keep it sweet, an’ th’ Sunday after tak it up as an owd womman

does her knittin', an' as unconcarned abeawt what theyn done o'th' o'er week, as if heaven wurno' worth above one day's thowt eawt o' seven."

"That may be said of many people, I must admit," said Mr Wilson, somewhat edified by the arguments of his host and his odd way of putting them, "but we meet with some whose earnest devotion on the Sabbath day will surely balance a slight account of worldliness they may have suffered to come over them during the intervals of their worship."

"Just so," admitted the joiner; "but heaw con they wipe eawt a score o' wickedness an' deviltry and selfishness wi' a cop-web teawel? And some folk ut I know han it choaked up like a fuddler's ale shot ut hasno bin reckont for months, an' ut's thowt too big for t' ever be paid. It doesno do, I know, to say ill o' one's neighbours; but if th' owd book says reet ther's some on 'em han gotten a fearfu' shopscore wi' th' owd blacksmith ut'll oather ha' t' be paid off same as

Dives paid his, or else wiped eawt wi' a rougher mop nor they calkilatn' on. Look at this neaw, an' if it doesno show yo' what wrung notions some folk han abeawt what maks good Christians, yo' may say ut my senses han gettn o'th' wrung side o' my yed for once an' away. Yon's eawr Nanny stirrin', I yer; ther'll be some signs o' that stew coming eawt of it hole e'enneaw, I see," and Jacob again stuck the poker into the fire and lifted a mass of it considerably nearer the chimney.

After succeeding in his endeavour to make the blaze lick the rack-an'-hook, the joiner spread himself at the hob, and resumed his discourse.

"Ther's a chapel deawn here," he said, "ut belongs to a sort o' folk they co'en '*Skinner*s,' an' I think by th' ways o' some on 'em they're pratty weel namet. They're for havin' a' heaven to thersels for owt I know, an' they'd pike th' yearth till ther nowt nobbut booan laft, if they mut have their own way. They'n turnt ther backs

upo' everybody else, for they sen ther's nob'dy nobbut their own set ut's gooin' th' reet road ; an' for my part I'd as lief goo to a comfortable corner o'th tother shop as keep company wi' some o' their brun. One o' ther elders wur Johnny Wrigley, a dearly beloved neighbour o' mine, he wur onct, an' as arrant an owd rascot as ever higglet wi' owd Nick. His fingers wurn set like a bur for scrattin', an' if he'd an idea ut anybody wur gettin' tuppunce ut he thowt he should have hissel, he'd ha' gone into a tremblin' fit, an' sed th' woald could no' last lung, it wur gettin' so selfish an' wicked.

“ Well, Johnny gan up his spoon* one day beawt havin' any mooar warnin' nor other folk, an' it caused sich a doomentation amung his brothers an' sisters at th' chapel, at some *on* em took to, an' slattert ther tears same as if they'd lost th' corks o'ther e'en. Well, he'd bin sich a backset to ther church ut' the pa'son must praich a buryin' sarmon for him th' Sun-

* *Gan up his spoon*; synonymous with “Kicked the bucket;”—died.

day after he're buried, an' when th' day coom I thowt a' th' napkins i' th' hollow 'ud hardly ha' moppt up th' e'e wayther ut wur parted with by the congregation. Owd Thumpbook wur praichin', an' as soon as he gan eawt his text he sed—I recollect th' words—‘*Amung th' sons o' men yesterday, an' to-day i' glory.*’ Yo may be sure ut I begun o' thinkin' till I're wellymoidert abeawt this, an' wondert heaw it wur ut such an owd scape-Sattin as Johnny could geet th' reet side o' God o' Meety wi' nubbut pooin he's face every Sunday, after six days' lyin' an' chettin', an' grabbin' at carnal things, as I knew he did. I met ha' sed mooar, but I know my owd dame has a bit of a leynin' toart 'em, an' hoo wouldno behave so farrantly, if hoo yerd what I're talkin' abeawt.”

The discourse upon the subject which our friend had introduced was brought to a pause by his spouse Nanny presenting herself at the foot of the stairs ; the nightcap still enclosing a face whose expression hardly indicated a temper of the worst kind. She appeared to

be younger by several years than her husband, and no doubt had she been trimmed up in costume suitable to her person, she might easily have been taken for his daughter. Nanny was, however, rather antiquated in her style of dressing ; a lilac-printed bedgown, of a pattern so unpretending as scarcely to be distinguished from the self-coloured article, substituting the more modern fashion of outer garment, beneath the skirts of which she wore a thick gray linsey petticoat, with ample tucks plaited warmly over it, made her whole appearance one in which a simple matronly grace was the prevailing feature. Add to this that a white glossy woollen napkin was neatly spread over her shoulders, its corners being fastened in front to her apron strings, and at the back pinned to her bedgown, and the reader may get some idea of the *personnel* of the lady whom Jacob Robinson was pleased to call his “ owd dame.”

If the looks of the latter person might be accepted as the index to her heart, she was hardly the vixen Jacob would have led his

guest to expect. On the contrary, her face wore a smile of so sober yet so assuring an expression, that Mr Wilson could not help feeling thoroughly at home under its influence. A pair of "list" slippers bore her over the floor with a gentle and quiet tread, that seemed to say "Sabbath" in each soft foot-fall as it lisped among the sand with which the floor was strewn, and the mild, but somewhat nervous accents in which she wished the elder visitor "Good morning!" adding, "An' to thee, little love," as she glanced at the child, appeared further to enhance the beauty and holiness of that morning in the stranger's estimation.

"I think hoo's slept weel, Jacob, bless her?" observed the dame, referring to the child by another expressive look.

"Ay, like a top," the joiner affirmed.

"An' that's a wonder, seein' ut every-thing's strange to her."

"But she would be quite tired out," said Mr Wilson.

"Ay, poor thing!" And Nanny drew

the child to her knee, and gently smoothed down her hair.

“ We happen hanno’ as fine a heawse as yo’n bin used to,” continued the dame, directing her observations this time to Mr Wilson ; “ but it’s cleean, an’ harbours nowt, I hope, ut ud do ill to a worm.”

“ It is not in me to think otherwise,” replied Mr Wilson ; “ and even were I disposed, your kindness to a stranger who had no claim upon you save that of common humanity, would be sufficient to remove all doubt on that score.”

“ Well, I’m sure yo’re welcome,” Nanny added, “ if it is but little one can do. I could no’ mak it eawt yesterneet what eawr felly wur abeawt when he coom whoam, an’ I happen sed things ut I shouldno’ ha’ done, for sometimes he comes whoam so queer when he’s had a pint above he’s leawance, an’ I think he’d mooar nor did him good yesterneet, at any rate.”

“ Well, never mind what noather theaw sed nor I sed,” insisted Jacob, looking wist-

fully in the direction of the oven-door ; “ if I had a pint o’er messur ther’s summut theere ut’ll put me to rects, i’th’ snifter of a rappit. So let’s be havin’ it eawt o’th’ oon, an I’ll put a wut cake to th’ foyer for t’ be toastin’. What’s yon lad doin’ up-stairs ? ”

“ He’re stondin’ on his yed agen th’ drawers when I coom deawn,” replied the lad’s mother.

“ I’ll mak him,” said the father, “ ut he’ll noa know which eend he’s on e’enneaw, if he does no come deawn th’ stairs ; ” then reaching down an oat cake, he placed it before the newly “ scaled ” fire to toast, whilst his helpmate drew the stew-mug from its simmering-place, and set it down inside the fender.

Jacob having commenced his toasting operations, and after instructing his spouse to turn the cake before it was “ red wot,” made an incursion into the retreat of his refractory son, a sharp yell intimating the amount of chastisement inflicted on the wayward youth, who came bouncing down-stairs with the utmost trepidation, and apparently regardless

of the presence of strangers. After scratching his head a moment, the delinquent crept behind the table, and slowly made his passage in the direction of a low stool, which he dropped upon without the slightest invitation. So far introduced to the strangers, Dick made bold to peep betwixt his knuckles at the elder party, afterwards surveying the younger more distinctly, and with diminished reserve. His father now presenting himself with a severely admonitory look in his countenance, the youth sprang upon his feet, and made hasty search for his missing stockings. These having been found, after considerable hunting in unlikely places, such as inside the oven, in the salt-box, and amongst the many-coloured contents of a bag of patch-work, Dick became easier in his deportment, and made evident progress in his reconciliation with the visitors. He even gave an insinuating look in the direction of one of his pockets, as if he would convey to the youngest of his new acquaintances an intimation that it contained something with which juvenile taste is not inaptly associated,

in the shape of toffy, fruit, or marbles. This became the prelude to other gallantries, for the girl meeting his advances with a not unfriendly smile, encouraged him to such displays of familiarity as completely to take his father “off his legs” with surprise. The latter, but from a feeling of his better nature, might have frowned a reproof at his son’s so far forgetting his “owd-fashindness” as to evince the possession of other and frailer qualities, common to youth of an unpeculiar bent; instead of that he merely gave a passing grunt, as if he regarded the circumstance as one of the unaccountable eccentricities of human nature.

The equanimity of the family group being thus restored, and the offending member having brightened up his looks by a liberal application of soap and water, and the brisk administration of a rough towel, the head of the house resumed his preparations for what he might have termed the substantial introduction to his Sunday “sarvice.” Three large bowls of reeking stew, well garnished by a milky-way of Jacob’s favourite constellations,

were placed upon the table, to which were added systematically broken pieces of the toasted oat-cake, stuck in edgeways, so as to resemble an accumulation of drifted ice. The female members of the breakfast party were to feast on the more delicate fare offered by tea and new muffin, which the joiner characterized as “sloppy,” and unfavourable to the growth of bone and muscle, but which his spouse regarded as the indispensable components of a “gradely wimmen’s breakfast,” especially adapted for Sunday mornings.

The table around which they all assembled was a spacious one, and strongly made, as if intended to be handed down to a tenth generation of the Robinsons. Jacob had made it himself, as might have been supposed from the stubbornness of the legs, which would not give way to ordinary kicks, but kept their position with the firmness of the parish stocks. The joiner took his place at the board with the air of a domestic king, where he sat ladling and blowing his “mess” like a hungry Boreas, and looking invitation to his guests

with an expression in his countenance more welcoming than words can utter. "Little Addy" took a seat near her father, the opposite side of the table being ornamented by the unkempt head of the junior Robinson, who was not yet allowed to sit over his meals, through a prejudice the father entertained that growing youths, when they took a recumbent position at table, deprived their legs of a proportionate share of the nutriment the meal afforded.

"Neaw, Dick, behave thysel afore I knock thy left ear off. No marlocks afore strangers. If that is nor enough for thee theaw con ha' mooar when theaw's swallut it; so use thy spoon for what it wur made for."

This injunction was called forth from Jacob by his having observed Dick engaged in fathoming the depth of his bowl by dipping his spoon into it, and afterwards contemplating with a look of mixed satisfaction and surprise the greasy registration on the spoon handle. No other incident interfered with the harmony of the breakfast table, so Jacob took

his “ slip-throat ” with expressive gobbles, and munched at his “ sops ” until his cheeks came out in full bloom, and the dew hung upon his forehead in healthy drops, that called in frequent requisition the apron which he had tied about his loins. He now felt that he had attained such a degree of physical and mental firmness (thanks to the quality of his breakfast) as to be enabled to break to the stranger the purpose that was uppermost in his mind. For this he further prepared himself with one or two coughs and hems, and a few unnecessary applications of his apron. At last he put the inquiry—

“ Han yo’ owt particular marked eawt for this little wench o’ yo’re, Mesthur Wilson ? ”

“ Not yet,” was the reply. “ I have scarcely an idea how I may be situated when I get to Waverlow, so cannot say what I shall do in that respect. However, I hope for the best, as I know I have friends in that village who will assist me.”

“ I’ve just bin thinkin’,” observed Jacob, “ ut if yo’ didno mind partin’ with her,—that

is, lettin' her live a bit fur off yo,—me an' my owd woman ud tak her as eawr own; an' if hoo wurnot as weel done to as anybody could do, yo met tak th' difference eawt o' my ribs th' fust time yo let on me, neaw then."

Mr Wilson, deeply moved at the kind offer of his host, turned an inquiring glance towards the child, which was returned with a look so expressive of acquiescence in what the joiner had advanced, that he could find no plea upon which to found a refusal.

"I'm noane beawt brass,"* Jacob continued, seeing that he had made an impression on his guest, "if I do look like an owd knowmon; an' if yo'n a mind I'll spend a bit on her, ut ther shanno be sich a little hangel i' a' Irkdale as hoo shall be. They co'en mi *odd*, I know, an' a mon may well be when he con see other folk wi' ther bits o' huzzies reawnd 'em, an' noane o'ther own fort' mak em' *even*."

"What say you, Adelaide?" said Mr

* *Brass* among Lancashire people is identical with *money*.

Wilson, addressing his daughter, upon whose face hope and confidence were beaming; “Will you live with these people?”

“Yes, Pa,” replied the child, “if Ma is to come and live with us.”

“But Ma cannot come yet,” said the father, disconcertedly,—“cannot come even if you go with me; not yet, not *yet*.”

The child, evidently disappointed by the tenor of the latter communication, hesitated a moment, during which the feelings produced by hope deferred and a longing for a settled home,—anywhere, anywhere, so that it was a *home*, were working upon her childish inclinations. The prospect, however, of being enabled to lay aside the bonnet that was getting shabby, and the frock that was much worn and faded, for clothes that were to make a “little hangel” of her, at length ruled her determination, and she decided, though not without a tear of passing regret at the implied separation from her father, to remain with, and become the adopted daughter of, Jacob Robinson and his wife, Nanny.

No sooner was this point settled, and the preliminaries to further arrangements agreed upon, than Dick, to mark his approval of so welcome an addition, betook himself to a little cupboard that was ensconced in a corner of the buttery. From this repository he produced a small cup and saucer, upon which was inscribed “A present for Jane,” and with a grin of triumph placed them on the table.

“Eh, Dick!” said the mother, her hand trembling and her voice broken with sudden emotion, “whatever made thee think of thoose? They wur eawr Jane’s—ut’s neaw i’ heaven,—bless her! Tak ’em by—tak ’em by—till I con fotch ’em mysel,” and, as she uttered the last words, tears began to stream down her cheeks.

Jacob groaned, but beyond that no expression of pent-up grief escaped him; and he suffered himself to toy with the cup and saucer, as though their presence recalled to his recollection the living image of the dear departed.

This brief but touching episode in the

morning's proceedings having passed over, and the precious souvenirs of an undying affection having been returned to their former place, to be at another time produced by the dame herself, and consigned to the keeping of Adelaide, the serenity of the table was again restored, and the meal finished without any other incident to interrupt its progress.

Jacob now proposed an adjournment to the garden, to give Nanny an opportunity of removing the breakfast things, and where they might look out upon "natyer," and discourse upon such matters as appertained to the joiner's mode of spending his Sabbath mornings.

"See," observed the latter, producing a thick Bible from under his arm, and opening it at a previously-marked page, "folk thinken I'm a good-for-nowt, becose I winno mix amung th' *Skimmers*, an' pay candle-collection, an' class money, an' missionary tow, or summut they coen it. Neaw, it is no' becose I'm greedy, but I conno' do wi' sich mystifyin' talk as Owd Thumpbook maks use on when

he's trying t' turn black into white an' white into black wi' twistin' Scriptyer abeawt same as if it had bin written for nowt nobbut to set folk by th' ears. So I read th' owd book mysel, an' tak care ut some o'th' best on't's driven into that lad's yed (pointing to Dick, who had perched himself upon a raised flag, and assumed an attitude for listening, as appeared to be his weekly practice), an' if he doesn' betther by it, its labbor thrown away, that's a' ut I can say. Neaw, Dick, attention." With this injunction to his son, Jacob mounted an imaginary rostrum, and commenced reading the twelfth chapter of St Paul's Epistle to the Romans, with a peculiarity of articulation and accentuation that was no doubt intended to create a due effect upon the understandings of his small congregation. He was interrupted, however, by the passing of a two-horse coach along the causeway, which wound by the bottom of the garden, and which so attracted Mr Wilson's notice as to induce that gentleman to step down the walk for the purpose of obtaining a further view.

“Pride gooin’ t’ church!” shouted Jacob, seeing that his companion had left him. “Let ‘em goo, let ‘em goo; ther’ll be noather hosses nor carriages for t’ draw ‘em to th’ tother country. We’st a’ ha’ to be shoother to shoother on *us* road to theere.”

But Mr Wilson was so struck with the appearance of the vehicle that had passed, and was now receding in the distance, that the observations of his friend were lost upon him, and he stood riveted to the spot in a maze of doubt and wonder. The joiner closed his book on seeing that his guest’s attention was so steadfastly fixed upon other objects; and he too began to wonder in his turn what interest could be centred in so usual a spectacle.

Edward Wilson, if thou hadst known what that carriage contained, and what power the jewelled hand which rested on the lowered sash possessed to snatch thee from the dark uncertainty that lay before thee, how would curiosity have been changed to a feeling of intense joy or overpowering anguish, which

no exhortation could temper, or power short of death assuage! But—it was gone! A train of richly-apparelled worshippers at the shrine of our common faith descended, and reaching the church door, swept along the aisle to their velvet-cushioned stall, where they knelt in prayer, whilst a group more humble offered up their service in the garden “temple of the wayside.” Which, in *this* instance, would be the most acceptable in the sight of God? We shall see.

CHAPTER VII.

“ How is it,” said Mr Wilson, as he looked in the direction of Irkdale church, “ how is it that we sometimes feel a deep and absorbing interest in things that really do not concern us ;—things that we meet with by accident, and wonder where and under what circumstances we have seen them before ? The trappings of yon carriage are somehow as familiar to me as my own hand, yet where I have met with them before I cannot think. Do you know who is the owner ? ”

The joiner, having by this time descended from his imaginary rostrum, and after leaving Addy to make the acquaintance of a non-descript toy drawn by Dick from the depths of his capacious pocket, had sauntered down the garden to see what so completely engrossed the attention of his guest.

" Well, I conno' say ut I do," replied Jacob, pondering in his own semi-abstracted manner. " It goes past here every Sunday mornin', an' has done for some time. I think it's fro Cheetham Hill, or toart Crumpsa' way; but whoas it is I noather know nor care."

" It isn't that I care so very much," said the other, " only when we feel an unaccountable interest in anything we have an inclination to know some little about it, let the matter be what it may."

" Just so, just so," admitted Jacob.

" Have you never," continued Mr Wilson, " experienced that particular sensation yourself—of having met with an object that you felt confident that you had seen before, yet knew not under what circumstances ? "

" Yoi, I have."

" And the incident has continued to haunt your memory for a long time after ? "

" Ay," said Jacob, with a meaning shrug, " I remember th' second time ut ever I see'd my owd womman—I co her owd, tho' hoo's mony a yer t' turn o'er afore hoo's as owd as me

—I remember it wur Blakely wakes, an' I'd bin ramblin' abeawt amung th' lions* a' afternoon o'th' Monday wheere I'd seen abeawt four battles an' a race for a pair o' knee-breeches, an' just as I're slingin' my shoon by th' eend o'th' Crab-loane fort' go toart whoam, whoa should I meet but a young lass wi' a printud bedgeawn on ov a patthern ut I thowt I'd seen afore, but couldno' tell wheere. It wur a queer patthern—summut like an owd-fashint plate wi' willows an' bridges on it. I'd seen nowt like it in a' Blakeley beside—noa that day. Well, this bothert me above a bit, an' I stopt starin' afther her as stupit as a pot mule, hardly knowin' whether t' go one road or th' tother. E'nneaw hoo turnt hersel reawnd an' peept at me fro' th' fur eend of a bonnet ut wur abeawt th' length of a stove-pipe, noane one o' thoose brazent lookin' things they wear ne awo' days ut maks 'em favver as if smeawchin' wur gettin' eawt o' fashin', an' they'rн

* It is a singular fact that there are no fewer than *four* public-houses in the village of Blackley, near Manchester, each bearing the sign of the "Lion."

offerin' ther bits o' peawchers for anybody t' buss. Yon's a blossom, I thowt, at any rate, for her face wur as bonny a bit o' pink an' white as ever wur lapt i' straw an' ribbin', an' I felt as if I could ha' wisht it had bin Blakeley wakes every day. Ther'd be no hurt i' me axin' her a question, I thowt, if it wurno' in a cooartin' way, nor nowt wrank abeawt it; so I fraimt up to her, an I sed,

“‘ Owd wench, I think I've seen thee somewhere afore.’

“‘ Dun yo' think yo' han?’ hoo sed, an' hoo gan me another look, same as if hoo'd bin peepin' under a hedge.

“‘ I'm sure I have,’ I sed, ‘but I conno tell wheere. Did t' ever wayve to Owd Kay's i' Manchester?’

“‘ Ay,’ hoo sed.

“‘ That's wheere I've seen thi', then,’ I sed.

“‘ Well, an' what by it?’ hoo sed.

“‘ Nowt,’ I sed, ‘nobbut I're thinkin' if I happent t' leet *on* thee theere agen, we met come whoam t'gether, an' I'd carry thy wallet for thee.’

“ Well, I know no’ heaw it coom abeawt, but I’ve thowt sin’ it wur happen through what I’d yerd my Aint Mally say—*nowt venturt, nowt won*—but someheaw I’d no sooner getten th’ words eawt than I fund mysel o’er th’ yed in her bonnet, wi’ my e’en welly scrat eawt wi’ bits o’ bobs an’ bows ut wur stickin’ eawt of her cap-screen. That wur th’ beginnin’ o’ my cooartin’, an’ a’ through my thinkin’ I’d seen th’ wench afore. So one con hardly tell what leads to what, ’specially when we go deawn to a wakes, an’ see so mony pratty faces twinklin’ abeawt like bunches o’ posies on a rush-cart sheet.* But abeawt yon coach—”

Here the stranger, upon whom Jacob’s account of his courting adventure seemed to be lost, started as if from a reverie.

“ I must go,” said he, “ before it may be too late to go in peace. I will probe no

* The sheet that usually adorns the front of a “rush-cart” at the annual “rush-bearing,” a pastime still kept up in several Lancashire villages, is gaily decorated with ribbons, flowers, gold and silver plate, and other valuables.

further into this mystery, however I might desire it, and I feel that staying longer would only increase the temptation. I must go at once."

"But yo'n stop to a bit o' dinner?"

"No; that would be presuming too much upon your hospitality; better go at once," and the two left the garden-gate, and proceeded to join the children, who were already, as Jacob expressed himself, "as thick as inkle-wayvers," notwithstanding their short acquaintance with each other.

"Now," said Mr Wilson, as they entered the house, "let us understand each other before we part. I may not return to this neighbourhood for some time, and I could wish that I may have no anxiety on my child's account whilst I am away."

"Dunno' be unyessy abeawt her," said the joiner, in a very assuring manner, "hoo'll be as reet as a clock—mind if hoo isno'. I'll tak' care o' that mysel. But ther's one thing I should like t' be set reet abeawt,—an' at th' same time it's nowt to me,—but moathers

are moathers, yo know, an' if they dunno' aulus do weel for ther childer, they mun have a bit of a leynin' toart 'em, an' may sometime tak' a fit o' bein' queer, an' doin' things ut I dunno' like' t' think abeawt."

"I don't understand you," observed Mr Wilson, though he had evidently some idea of what his friend was driving at. "What is it you require explaining?"

"Well," said Jacob, rather embarrassed, "if sich a thing wurt' happen as yo' gettin' *wed* agen—."

"That is impossible whilst my wife is yet living."

"Well, yo' seen, I wurno' quite sartin' ut hoo wur livin', an' didno like axin' yo. Neaw I'm fain its comm eawt, but at th' same time it makes no difference to me; an if—"

"There is no mystery at all about it. My wife is living for anything I know to the contrary — though not in this country, nor indeed in France, and being as you are so kind as to interest yourself in my behalf, I don't mind telling you, in confidence, how-

ever, how we are placed in regard to each other.

“I married, like many others, above my sphere. My wife was the daughter of a well-to-do manufacturer, whilst I was merely a hand-loom weaver. I met with her at M——, where I was employed under her father in the capacity of overseer. I need not say that our courtship was short and somewhat romantic,—our marriage hasty and attended with much opposition on the part of my wife’s parents and friends. I strove all I could to deserve their reconciliation to the step we had taken, but without avail; they were inexorable. At length, tired of their persecution, we left M——, and went to reside in Waverlow, where I worked as a journeyman weaver, whilst my wife, struggling betwixt pride and affection, assisted in winding, and other things connected with weaving, which I had taught her. This lasted until yon child was born, when, feeling heavier responsibilities crowding upon me, I looked out for more lucrative employment, and succeeded in obtaining a situa-

tion as putter-out* to a firm in Manchester. This I threw up in disgust after several weeks' probation, during which I was compelled to do things that, even now, makes my heart ache to think of. I returned to my loom, resolved rather to contend with poverty than live to be continually at war with my conscience, as I found would be my inevitable lot in my new position.

“About this time a friend of mine introduced me to a gentleman from Lyons, who was in want of an overseer of weavers. The situation was offered to me, which I at once accepted, and ere Adelaide could use her feet we found ourselves domiciled in the silk metropolis of France. I had not long been engaged in this employment before I found such

* *Putter-out* is a term applied to the person who gives out work to hand-loom weavers. People occupying this position are regarded in an obnoxious light by the generality of weavers, simply from the fact that as most of them have risen from the ranks, not a few have been known to deal most tyrannically with those beneath them,—illustrating the adage—“Put a beggar on horseback, &c.”

favour with my employer, who was a kind man, that he took me into partnership. Here my good fortune, that had hitherto been so propitious, failed me. I could not be satisfied with prosperity. I became fond of gambling, and lost considerably. I struggled to regain my position and my lost credit by the very means through which I had parted with both. It was useless, however ; luck was against me, and a dissolution of partnership was the consequence.

“ I now became reckless, and pawned or sold everything of value that I could lay hold of to supply myself with the means of continuing a ruinous course. As a last and fatal act, whilst my wife was asleep I took from her finger a valuable diamond ring—a present from an aunt—and hazarded it against five thousand francs at one throw. My God !—that went too. I was now without resources—stript of everything by one man, a professional gambler, who lived like a prince on his plunder.

“ Now comes the climax. The diamond ring which this scoundrel had won was one day

seen by my wife on the finger of a courtezan, and fired with jealousy at this unaccountable transfer of her property, she fled that very day from home,— whither I never knew, though I had reason to suspect to America.

“There, now you have my history, however I may blush to give it. We cannot recall the past nor redeem treasures irrevocably lost, but there is an untried future before us, which we may make the most of.”

Jacob, when the stranger had finished his story, drew a long breath, as if to relieve himself. “I’m fain it’s no wurr,” he said, “I’re feart ther summut abeawt it a good deal short o’ gradely, summut one doesno’ like yerrin’ abeawt a womman, though this is bad enough.”

“I have never suspected there being anything of the kind you hint in this instance,” said Mr Wilson. “I have full faith in my wife’s honour, though condemning her imprudence. I was the first transgressor, and am prepared to suffer as I have suffered.”

“Well, that takts a bit o’th’ wynt o’ my

bags," said Jacob, with something like an explosion in his chest ; " an' I think betther o' wimmen neaw nor I did an heawr sin'. They're a plaguy lot, too, an' as bad fort' dress as a cross-graint plank ; but this o' mine's a bit o' softer wood nor I generally find 'em, though hoo's her knots abeawt her, for a' that. Well, am I to think ut when yo' laft France they'd let yo' stop theere no lunger, or yo' coom here o' yor own gate ? "

" On my own account," said the stranger. " I had to fall back upon the loom to obtain a subsistence, and followed the humble vocation of weaving for several years subsequent to my misfortunes. The Revolution breaking out, the silk trade became paralysed, and I was forced either to return to my native country or starve. I found the means of getting across the Channel, and have tramped hither, from Dover, every step of the journey, attended by my little girl, who has borne up bravely against every privation. God bless you for taking her under your care ! My heart

feels ten-fold relief from it, and if it be ever in my power to reward you——.”

“ Say nowt abeawt that—say nowt abeawt that,” exclaimed the joiner, with a wave of his hand, “ I’m nobbut doin’ what I’d like some’dy do by mine if they’rn flung to th’ wall, wi’ th’ wide woald afore ’em, an no co-in’ shops upo’ th’ road.”

“ Thank you, thank you,” said Mr Wilson. “ I must now take my leave, not wishing to meet the people returning from church. When I may meet you again I know not, but I hope it will be ere long. Adelaide, you will be a good girl, I know you will. Pray for your mother every night when you go to bed,—pray for these good people, and I will join you. You will be a good girl, won’t you?”

Addy had just left her companion exploring some secret recess in the hen-cote, popularly supposed to be a repository for marbles and other things that were forbidden to be brought out on Sundays, and the child stood waiting to take leave of her father.

“ I will be a good girl, father,” she said, climbing his knee for the accustomed kiss, and I will pray for mother and you, and all of us. And I won’t cry when you are gone. The boy says he will—he will—”

“ He will what, Adelaide ? ”

“ I hope you won’t think it naughty of him, but he says he will fight for me when he’s a big boy ? ”

“ Well done, Dick ! ” exclaimed Jacob, in an ecstacy of admiration of his son’s chivalry. “ He hasno gone to owd Saul’s skoo for nowt, I con tell yo. They startn o’feighten theere as soon as they con walk, an’ never gi’en o’er till they’n segs ole o’er ’em, an’ then theyre coed fit to tak care o’ thersel. If Dick turns tail to his promise, I’ll mak him t’ ate his own yed ; that I will. Well, good day, if yo’re determined t’ be off, though I’d rayther yo’d stop t’ yore dinner, for we’re havin’ what yo hanna tasted on o’ mony a yer, I dar-say,—a gradly meawntin’ of a pottato pie—very nee a wheelbarrow full, an made so as nob’dy nobbut eawr Nanny an’ owd Aisther-o’-Deb’s con mak’ em.

Well, ye mun ha' yor own road, I reckon, so good day to yo! Nanny, shake this gentleman's hont, for he's for gooin' whether-or-not."

"Good day to yo!" said the mistress of the house, and ere she could repeat it the door was closed, and the stranger gone. Click went the latch of the garden-gate, bang went the gate, and a receding footstep was now all that could be heard of one whose fate was henceforth to be inseparably linked with the fortunes, whether good or ill, of the "Odd House."

CHAPTER VIII.

TEN years have elapsed since the occurrence of the incidents so far related. Ten years have brought their wrinkles to whom care hath spared. Ten years have spread bright Summer blossoms and yielded harvests to the reaper's hook. Ten years have strewn their leaves upon each other's graves, wrapped them in snow-wove shrouds, and have vanished themselves like a dream into the past. Ten years have sent their good and evil to that judgment-seat where "nor fear nor favour turns the beam of fate," and the "Recording Angel" hath wept over and "blotted out for ever" sins that long suffering had engendered. Ten years have torn hearts asunder that lived but for love. Ten years have levelled rich and poor in the fellowship of the tomb, where neither "brassy monument" nor marble urn

avails to raise one atom of the titled dust above that of the lowliest hind. Ten years have furrowed the earth with strife,—seen warriors' plumes blossom with their crimson honours, to be gathered in Fame's charnel-house at last. Ten years have blown the bud of childhood into a flower ;—tinted its petals with a maidenly blush, and implanted in its core the germ of an inner being—the life for which we live,—that whether it be ripened into fruit, or blasted ere its perfume be shed, shall be named LOVE.

“ Oh Love—young Love,—bound in thy rosy band ;
Let sage or cynic prattle as he will,
Such hours as these alone redeem life’s years of ill.”

Ten years could not have passed over without adding many social changes to the calendar of events—changes which no foresight, however keen, could have fathomed in the future. The rich man brought to rags ; the beggar transported to a palace ; guilt overtaken by punishment, innocence crowned with happiness—these might have taught the worldly-wise that there is no certainty in

human attainments, no stability in the foundations upon which we build our hopes of fortune and success. "We become changed in the twinkling of an eye." Changes confound the greatest conservatism, and some of these changes have, during ten years, come over Irkdale.

It is the finest day of a glorious Whit-week—the grand summer pastime of South Lancashire—and Irkdale is alive with the bustle of preparation for a species of enjoyment, which brings no after-day regrets. The Sunday School bell is ringing as merrily as if care had been completely banished from the earth, and universal joy had taken its place. The young look as though it were impossible to grow old, and the aged are living a day of their childhood over again. Never were such cakes baked before; never such delicious things stored in creaking baskets and heaped on wheelbarrows, for field luncheon over those glorious English games of "cricket," "frog-leap," "hammer-and-block," "shepherd," and "Little Johnny Lingo;" never

were there such displays of new corduroy and brass buttons ; never such a galaxy of white frocks and caps as now made a “ milky-way ” of every lane and path that led to the school ; never were such antics indulged in by juveniles, nor ever, perhaps, was there an occasion on which these young hearts were so flooded with happiness.*

But the school procession is formed, and with its sober front of warden’s staff and formal gown, and its dribbling “ tag ” of noisy youngsters, with laceless shoes and newly-gashed waistbands, is moving down the lane towards the scene of approaching festivities. In charge of the lesser girls, and walking by their side, is a young person whose features are familiar would her parasol permit

* Those who have not witnessed the Sunday School processions which usually take place at Whitsuntide in Manchester and the surrounding villages, can form no idea of their magnitude nor the interest attached to them. The “ Lord Mayor’s Show ” may be considered to be a grand pageant, but it sinks into insignificance when compared to a Manchester School procession, which usually takes about an hour to pass the Exchange.

their being clearly seen. Now she stops to chide, now to encourage, and at another time to exchange glances with a youth who has much to do to keep his section of the procession out of the hedges and ditches on their route. Occasionally the two are brought together, when their glances become as eloquent a confession of love, as if told in words the most fervent. They are approaching a part of the "Hollow" whence eyes are watching them that they know not of, and which appear to divine, whether instinctively or not, the peculiar character of their acquaintance. Now they round a bend in the valley, and pause opposite a cottage door, where an old man, with head well whitened, sends forth playful wreaths of smoke from his morning's pipe. A younger person stands upon the garden "backing," much interested in the humble pageant that is passing. But he looks not upon the gilded staff nor upon the fluttering banneret, nor does he seem to have an ear for the jubilance of the unmanageable jorum who do anything but "bring up" the rear. His

eyes are fixed upon the two young people who are “ billing and cooing ” at the gate, and he watches their motions and listens to their whisperings as though the alternative of life and death hung upon what he heard and saw. The two separate,—the youth to pursue his hopeless task of shepherding, and the fair one to make a call at the cottage. Up the path she flies, eagerly watched by the individual from the “ backing.”

“ What neaw, Addy ? ” said the old man (who was no other than our venerable acquaintance, Jacob Robinson), as he looked with admiration upon the sylph-like figure that tripped past him.

“ I had forgotten my hymn-book, grandfather,” replied the girl playfully, “ I left it on the drawers. Yonder it is. I must make haste, or I shall be left behind.” So saying, she hastened into the house, recovered her book, and our young friend Adelaide Wilson was soon by the side of the youth whom she had left at the gate.

Addy was now approaching the dawn of

womanhood. Nobody would have taken her to be the pensive, thinly-clad child of ten years ago. She seemed to have imbibed an influence from the south in her kindling vivacity, tempered by a womanly restraint, that added to the charm of personal attractions. Addy had not been "born to blush unseen," nor to "waste her sweetness on the desert air." Nor was she to be hidden from loving and admiring eyes, even if they had to explore the nooks and corners of Irkdale before lighting upon her. She was beloved, as we shall soon gather, from a sincere though unexpected confession.

"What's do wi' thee, Dick?" exclaimed Jacob Robinson to the youth who had been watching the procession from the garden, and now sat beneath the hedge, gazing upon vacancy. "Theaw stares wurr nor a throttled earwig. Art' watchin' for fairies i'th' dayleet, or what, as theaw looks so gawmless?"

The young man appeared not to have heard his father, but still sat in a state of abstraction.

“ Th’ lad’s beside hissel,” thought Jacob, “ or else he’s happen workin’ eawt summut i’ Euclid, as he coes it. I’ll noa disturb him.”

This was an unnecessary precaution on the part of the joiner, for immediately the boy arose from his seat, applied his finger nails to his head, as if he had meant to dig up by the roots the short scrunt hair that could hardly be said to grow in that quarter, and coming slowly forward, exclaimed—

“ I’m floored, feyther !”

“ Floored ? What dost meeān by that, Dick ? ”

“ I’m done for.”

“ An whoa’s done for thee ? ”

“ It’s *her*.”

“ *Her* ! ” said the father, twisting sharply round, as if he expected to see somebody behind him undiscovered before. “ What *her*,—what dost meeān ? Art off it, Jacan-apes ? ”

“ I’m floored ! ” repeated Dick, with a groan.

“ Well, then, get up agen if t’ art floored,

an' see if theaw conno' throw thy mon i' th' next tussle."

"Tussle, feyther? I'm past a tussle; I'm cleean thrown, an' my hont up."

"Well, an' whoa's tumblet thee i' sich a dampert fleawnder?"

"It's *her*, feyther, eawr Addy."

Jacob opened his eyes right "to th' back," as he would have said, and letting his pipe drop mechanically from his mouth, exclaimed with significant earnestness—

"Oh—h—h—aw see!" Then turned into the house, leaving his love-stricken son gazing with a wild stare in the direction of the closing door.

"Theere, neaw," soliloquized Dick, dropping his chin, and looking as glum and as "yonderly" as crossed love could well make him; "I've put my foowt int' wi' th' owd buffer, I reckon. But I dunno' care what comes neaw; I conno' be wurr nor I am. I feel as I could liket' feight, an' I hanno' fowten this mony a yer; an' I will feight too, if I dunno'—"

What might have been the strong sentiment about to be uttered it would be difficult to conjecture, for at that moment Dick heard a voice calling out—

“Mister Robinson,—Mister Richard!”

Dick, on turning round to see who thus addressed him, confronted “with lowering brow and flashing eye” the youth who, to use his own expressive idiom, had been the principal cause of his being so completely “floored.”

“Neaw for it,” he thought; “ther’s a chance of a battle neaw, at any rate,” and just as he was about hinting “Come on!” his adversary, with an expression on his countenance anything but defiant, stepped up and inquired if the other’s name *was* not Richard.”

“*Dick* ’ll do,” replied the younger Robinson ferociously, “what dost want wi’ me?”

“Miss Wilson,” said the youth, unconscious of the terrible concussion with which the name struck upon his listener’s ear,

“gives me to understand that you’re the young man who saved my life the other day whilst bathing in the Brook Dam.”

“An’ what abeawt it?” growled Dick.

“Well, you see,” answered the stranger, a well-behaved young gentleman, handsome in person, and of good address, “I’ve returned to thank you for your generous conduct on that occasion, and to assure you that anything I can do to serve you, I would most gratefully undertake.”

“I saved thy life, an’ would do so agen if I’d a chance,” said Dick, softening a little in his manner towards the young gentleman. “But at th’ same time, I’d as lief see the d—l as thee abeawt eaur heawse.”

“Why, what offence have I committed?”

“Here,” said the other, in a low, but firm voice, “what is ther between thee an’ yon wench?”

“Oh, only friendship, I assure you.”

“It’s a cute sort o’ friendship. I con tell, mon. Ther’s summut else nor that.”

“ And what else would you suppose there is between us ? ” said the youth, blushing the deepest crimson.

“ Wheay, what but *love?* ” gasped Dick, as if he would have cut the last word in two with his teeth.

The other hung down his head, and was silent.

“ Neaw, look thee here, ” Dick continued, “ or else it ’ ll be wurr for thee. No hanky-panyin ’ wi ’ owt belungin ’ to us ; it winno ’ do. If yon wench is poor, hoo ’ s wo ’ th o ’ th ’ gins-bread snickets ther is i ’ Crumpsa ’, or Cheet-ham-hill, or any o ’ yor fine places. An ’ if theaw doesno ’ toe fair wi ’ her, an ’ be up-reet an ’ deawn-straight ; if by oather word or thowt, or owt else, theaw gives her one minit ’ s unyessiness, th ’ next time I leet on thee I ’ ll wrythe thy neck reawnd till it ’ s as twisted as a clewkin ’ bant. Neaw, then ; goo after thy scholars, an ’ never lemmi ’ see thee agen--never, never.”

The young gentleman, struck dumb by Dick ’ s earnest and threatening manner, ima-

gined himself already guilty of some indiscretion towards Adelaide Wilson.

“ Ay, theaw may rub up thy curls,” resumed the other, “ but if t’ doesna mind what theawrt doin’ theaw’ll get thy yed powed wi’ summut wurr nor a pair o’ sithers’ (scissors), so chew that, an’ it’ll be breakfast, dinner, and baggin’ for thee for awhile.”

Concluding this injunction, Dick turned upon his heel, and dashed through a small gate at the end of the house; then throwing his arms upon the pigcote wall, sank into a reverie from which it was some time ere he awoke.

His new acquaintance, bewildered by the position in which he found himself so strangely placed, strode mechanically down the walk, in pursuit of his companions; gathering ominous forebodings from the nature of his encounter with the joiner’s son, that no part of the day’s pastime could for a moment drive away.

CHAPTER IX.

DICK ROBINSON stood for an hour or more listening to the snoring of the pigs, and trying to familiarize himself with the cheap and quiet comforts of swinish life. He wondered if pigs ever loved, or were jealous of one another, when a sow seemed to show more regard for some one of her male companions than she did for the rest. No; a boiled potato, or a pail-full of "swill" appeared to have greater charms for porkies of both sexes than a tender squeak or the sweetest smile that an expanded snout and the twinkling of a gimlet eye could fashion. They were not the beings to sit staring at each other as he had gazed at his foster-sister. None of them "did" their *bristles* up in provoking curls. Theirs was too quiet, too somnolent a life to be disturbed by fretful passions that follow in

the wake of love. They sighed not in their sleep, unless their dreams happened to be haunted by visions of sausages and ham collops, or of being suspended by the heels in the kitchen, with the mockery of a raw potato stuck in their mouth.

Whilst our young friend was thus speculating upon the superiority of swinish over human nature, the sound as of singing came upon his ear. The snoring of his favourite grunters lost all its melody at the first breath of harmonized human voices, and he listened eagerly. The singing came from an adjacent field, whither the school people had gone for their day's recreation, and as Dick listened to their voices, one sweeter than all the rest, as he fancied, telling how angels rejoiced at the resurrection of the Lamb, he felt how much the world would be improved by the addition of a little more music, especially such as he was then listening to.

Dick never understood the art of music, not having made any further advances in its cultivation than is implied in the incessant

and random blowing of a tin whistle, which instrument he had performed upon day and night until his father made a drumstick of it by hammering with it betwixt his ears. Had he been able now with pipe or trumpet to have awakened the sweet and love-whispering echoes of Irkdale by a flourish of “Colin and Phœbe,” which he had heard his mother sing, how he would have charmed the ears of somebody. But in that respect he must remain dumb, and when he reflected how few qualifications he possessed wherewith to captivate the female heart, how plain was his person, and how limited his accomplishments, he gave himself up for the moment to as deep despair as ever blighted love brought to the human heart.

What had induced his father, Dick wondered, to go to his bench during that portion of Whit-week usually devoted to recreation. Surely enough that was his saw grating at a board, and going also at more than its accustomed speed. The wind was blowing strangely in that quarter he felt convinced,

and the young man augured nothing pleasant from a circumstance so unusual.

“Dick! wheer’s that lad?” was heard to come from the little workshop, where Jacob had set to work as though he was in earnest.

“Richart, thy feyther wants thee,” shouted Nanny, bending her head over the rails where she usually hung her mop, and whence she could just obtain a glance at her love-lorn son.

“What does he want me for?” asked Dick, not at all anxious to go near his father at that particular time.

“Theaw mun come an’ see;” and immediately Nanny’s pattens were heard to be “neckling” over the kitchen flags in her retreat from the backyard.

Dick scratched his head for a minute, then diving his knuckles to the very bottom of his trousers pockets, and hitching his shoulders almost to his ears, he followed his mother into the house.

The joiner was just casting his eye along the edge of a newly-sawn board as his son

approached his presence, and stood waiting his commands.

“Here,” he said to the wondering youth, “stond here while I get th’ length *on* thee wi’ this boart.”

“What han yo’ up neaw, feyther?” said Dick, not able to make even a guess at the designs of his parent.

“Theaw’ll see,” replied the latter, placing the board against his son’s back, and making a chalk-mark a little above his head. “If theaw hasno’ bin rocked enough i’ thy younger days, it’s time theaw’d a new kaythur (cradle) made for thee; though I think ther never wur five feet ten o’ one made afore. Theaw’ll be a big un t’ rock, I know, but theaw wants summut if Euclid’s made no betther a mon on thee, nor ut theaw should go starin’ afther a wench’s bishop-strings till theaw’rt welly blynt to owt else. I thowt we’d browt thee up different, I did.”

“What dun yo’ meeán?”

“What does *theaw* mean,—hardenin’ thyself, as I thowt theaw wur doin’ like a piece o’

hoyn, agen a' sort o' buzzert-hookin' temptations, an' sich like unscientific vanity. Theaw'll never be a philosopher if theaw lets thyself be floored wi' a pair o' wench's een. Besides, what right has theaw t' think abeawt *her*, obbut as a brother should think abeawt a sister?"

"What—"

"Eawr Addy, I meean, knowmon."

"I never *ha'* thowt nowt abeawt her, nobbut as a *brother*."

"Well, then, what's do wi' thee; for theaw's lookt a' mornin' as yonderly as if theaw'd lost th' guiders o' thy een?"

"I conno' abide t' see nob'dy else takkin' notice *on* her, same as I've seen this mornin';" and Dick fetched up a sigh in a manner that few are known to do when a *sister* only is in the question.

"Wheay, what hast seen?" said the joiner, opening his eyes as if a new light was break ing in upon him.

Dick here related what he had observed that morning during the time the school pro-

cession was passing ; how sweet a young man appeared to be upon Adelaide, and how she seemed to reciprocate his attentions ; how he had accused this youth of harbouring designs against the girl, and how he had laid himself under obligations to reduce the fellow to “spoon mayte” if he did not mind what he was about.

Jacob put down the board which he had facetiously expressed himself as intended for the “keel” of his son’s cradle, and leaning himself against the bench with his hands resting upon his hips, he commenced such a scrutiny of Dick’s countenance as made that individual quail beneath the glance.

“I never fund thee i’ so mony lies,” he said, at length, and after some inward comments upon the nature of the communication, “but I think theaw’s towd one neaw, an’ fund th’ stuff.”

“Nay, I hanno,” Dick protested ; “as sure as I’m here ther’s some pee-weetin’ goin’ on between ’em, I con tell, feyther.”

“An’ whoa is this young spreawt ut theaw

ses wur talkin' soft to her, an' makkin' a lookin'-glass of her face?" demanded Jacob, getting his passion up as he would the motion of his lathe; "does theaw know him?"

"Ay," replied Dick, disconcertedly; "he's Mesthur Herbert's lad, down at th' Grange."

"He's the—well, damper his young gallows favvert neck!" vociferated Jacob at the tip-top height of his wrath, "I'll—."

"I've promist to screw it reawnd for him if he doesno behave hissel," broke in the other warmly, "an' I'll do it. At th' same time, he's a dacent lad o' th' sort."

"Ay, o'th' *sort*; but look at his feyther, a gamblin', thievin', chettin', black-leggin', God-forswearin' wastrel, ut owt t' be teed up to a loom-pawst, an' weight-rope till within two yures of his life, for a dampert roscot as he is."

"We should no' be so hard upo' th' lad for what his feyther is; *he* conno' help it, yo' known."

"Nawe, a jackass conno' help bein' what

it is, but whoa spares it booans for th' sake o' that."

" I saved him oncenet fro' dreawnin'."

" Theaw did ? Where ? "

" I'th' bruck dam."

" Oh, I yerd on't. Theaw should ha set thy foot on his yed, an'—nawe, that would no' ha' bin reet, noather ; I should ha' done as theaw did mysel' if I'd bin able. Good lad, Dick ! I think theaw'll do beawt *kay-thur* this time. Ay, well, I remember, he're a nice sort of a lad, folk sed, an' fond o' skooin', I believe. I never knew whoa he wur afore," and Jacob softened down at once, and assumed a very mild description of " incensed old parent," a character which even less serious incidents than the one his son referred to, sometimes induced him to make his own. " Hast' ever seen his moather, Dick ? " the joiner resumed, after mentally dwelling on the construction of a shaving, which he had seized in his passion and now held in his hand.

" Nawe," replied the son, " but they sen

hoo's as pratty as paint. I wish he hadno' takken on her so mich."

"Why, Swetty?"

"I could ha' liket him betther if he hadno' bin so hondsome," said Dick, the symptoms of his morning's jealousy returning.

"An con he be too hondsome for eawr Addy?" demanded Jacob, sharply.

"Th' hondsomest are no' aulus th' *best*," replied the other, placing considerable emphasis on the last word.

"That's becosse theaw'rt noane so partikilar farrantly thysel', I reckon," observed the father, turning suddenly to the bench, and waving his hand. "Goo thy ways into th' heawse. I see heaw theaw art. Theaw's gettin' thy yed turnt abeawt a hawve a time reawnd too mich, an' nowt'll suit thee neaw nobbut abeawt two armfull of a wench, if there's any i'th' Hollow ut'all ha' thee. Away wi' thee—theaw'll do no mooar good neaw, I can see."

With these observations the joiner dismissed his son, and then taking up a half-

finished shuttle which lay upon the bench, commenced spoiling the rest of his work in a most reckless and unskilful manner ; grunting and gasping at times, as he reflected on the domestic difficulties that appeared to present themselves to his mind.

Dick Robinson, it must be confessed, hardly knew the state of his own heart. That he loved his foster-sister there could be no doubt ; but how did he love her ? As a sister, or as one to whom he would be connected by a dearer tie ? He had watched Adelaide grow up near him without, as he thought, entertaining a single sentiment beyond brotherly affection towards her. He could have been content, he felt sure, if she remained Adelaide Wilson for ever. All that he wanted was to be near her—to hear her voice about the house, if it was only calling him now and then by the scarcely euphonious monosyllable that represented his name. For this he had worked “like a slave” to get “over money” wherewith to lavish presents upon her, and thus obtain the usual grateful acknowledg-

ment of a kiss, always planted, as he wished it to be, in the vicinity of his left ear. He had seen with pride the pinafore give place to the small leaf-like apron that she had made out of a couple of fents of his own weaving. He had noted with interest the increasing roundness of her arms, and the spreading dimples that appeared here and there about her face and elbows.

To have this being still about him was all our young friend had hitherto wished. But now that he saw danger of her being taken from him, a new feeling had sprung up in his breast. He loved her with all the ardour of a more sentimental temperament, but without the hope that should attend on such pure devotion ; and he now felt prepared to lay down his life for her happiness.

In this mood Dick sought his book and slate, but could work no other problem than Adelaide. He tried to read, but his eye lingered so long upon a page, that he must, unconsciously, have read it several times over. He looked towards his loom, but, being holi-

day time, he felt no inclination to disturb the cover placed over the work. How to divert his thoughts from the one absorbing object he knew not; and so he sat mechanically turning over leaves that he had once perused so eagerly, but now possessed as little attraction as if they were so many pages of blank paper. Suddenly he threw down the book, hung his slate hurriedly in the corner, and then, rushing into the kitchen to make a hasty toilet, intimated to his mother that he had determined upon "goin' to th' races."

CHAPTER X.

ALTHOUGH school festivities may be regarded as the principal feature in the pastimes of a Lancashire Whit-week, Manchester and its neighbouring villages are noted for the avidity with which their inhabitants betake themselves to other, and, in some instances, more questionable sources of enjoyment. If the weather be fine, there may be seen an ever-pouring stream of mounted and pedestrian holiday people taking the direction along Piccadilly to the now popular place of amusement known as “Belle Vue Gardens,” there to wander among the many walks, pic-nic on the grass, dance on the spacious platform, tease the animals in the zoological department, and finally to witness the blowing up of an artificial city, amidst coloured fireworks, to the strains of “God save the Queen.”

Let the weather be anything except the very worst, on the three days commencing with Wednesday, as numerous a crowd may be seen jostling their way in an opposite direction along the continuous thoroughfare of Market-street. These are bound to our local “Epsom”—the race-ground near Kersal Moor; confusion, bustle, and anxiety prevailing along the whole route. Any sort of conveyance, from a 'bus to a donkey cart, is deemed worthy the patronage of the latter class of pleasure seekers, and the interest taken in a certain “event” is so profoundly absorbing, that many ludicrous sights and incidents are passed over without provoking a smile. There is little of that gaiety on the road which marks the advent of the great metropolitan carnival, the “Derby day.” That famous national institution, “Punch and Judy,” has long since been banished from the street corners, through lack of patronage; the acrobat displays his spangled tights in vain; “up with it again” attracts but few adventurers, and the hurdy-gurdy cannot muster

more than a couple who do not deem the exercise of the “light fantastic toe” as too trivial a matter to interfere with the graver consideration involved in the issue of a horse-race.

Men and times have changed since the period when “Kersal Moor Races” was an institution yet undisgraced, and scarcely patronized by the professional black-leg, or by people who make their cunning save their hands in the pursuit of lucre. Then the “road” presented a far different spectacle to that of the present day. Then the world moved along leisurely, mirth and sandwiches were plentiful, a fiddle chirped at the “Grove,” and dusty shoes gathered under its benches as the wearers took their resting “gill” by the way.

Thirty years ago eaves-dropping at stable-doors had not become a profession, or if so, was confined to aristocratic emissaries; nor had “tipsters” begun to advertise “dead certainties,” and entreat the whole sporting community to “send stamps” for their “selections.” Then the craft of “book making”

was confined to "scribes and pharisees," and had not been taken up by men whom nature and education had unfitted for the pen—men who carried about them dogs-eared note-books and pug-nosed pencils, and made desks of their hats at street corners. Then finger-nails had some chance of being pared with either knife or scissors, as they were not bitten off during the two hours' anxiety about an expected "turn-up." Sporting nomenclature was in its alphabet. We had not our "ponies," our "monkies," and our "fivers," and "Patrick's c'rect card" was the only "list" that we saw from year to year. We slept after the race was over, and balanced our winnings against our losses without the aid of arithmetical calculation.

At the time of which I write Manchester was about entering upon its first stages of the sporting fever. Several people were known to have made large fortunes at very little exercise of their brains, and the whole tag-rag and bob-tail of would-be millionnaires mingled their yells in the great scramble for the pos-

session of unhallowed wealth. F——, who could not squeeze a living out of the beer-barrel, had “made a good thing of it.” S——, who had scarcely sense enough to sit on a cart shaft, now handled bank notes as if they were so much tobacco paper; and W——, after exhausting every profession in the lowest grade, now rode in his own “trap,” and was deemed “good for a thousand;” and all this by having taken to “betting.” Who would work for a living, with such examples of easily attained prosperity before them?

It was “cup” day, and the best horse-flesh was to be brought out for such an important and momentous occasion. Those who would only bet hundreds upon minor events, now invested their thousands; and little sporting men, who had not got beyond silver, made their engagements proportionately. “Thomas-street” had been deserted at an early hour; its frequenters having betaken themselves to the banks of the Irwell, where they could exercise their vocation upon more legitimate ground. Only a few remained be-

hind, and these were of that unlucky class who were invariably *missing* "good things," by hairbreadth chances, and, as a matter of consequence, were always penniless. Three or four were congregated about the steps of the "Mill-stone," consulting the pages of very small books, and making pencil-marks opposite certain names. Driblets of others were passing in and out at the tavern-door, very intent upon fathoming the mysteries of fore-knowledge, through the agency of beer, coffee, and tobacco. One of the latter, after having taken a bird's-eye view of the street, right and left, put up his finger, and immediately a rather seedy-looking female, with a bonnet that had once been gay, and reticule that had seen better days, crossed over the street, and the two engaged in a very animated conversation for about five minutes.

"I have just seen Mr Herbert," said the woman, "and he advised me by all means to put my little money on Queen Bess, it's sure to pull it off."

"What price is it at?" inquired the

other, picking the lint from the corner of his pocket, for want of something more substantial to get hold of."

"Out of the betting altogether," replied the female, with a very knowing and confident air. "If it wins, it'll be quite a turn-up."

"Heaw is it, Fan?" said the fellow, chucking his companion under the chin, upon which hung a drop of perspiration and red paint, "ut theaw's getten so thick wi' Mesthur Herbert ut he'll tell thee owt theaw wants t' know?"

"Pothook, do you see any green in my eye?" said Fan, touching with her fore-finger a rather bleared optic, and exhibiting a smirk upon her face that looked like an old smile worn threadbare.

"Oh, it's *that* road, is it? Cleeans his office, and rubs his desk, an' tak's care t' aulus be weel brusht up thyself whenever he meets thee. Oh, I see," and "Pothook" placed his finger to his nose in a manner which implies having the most profound

knowledge of other people's business, and the concerns of the world in general.

"Come, if you insinuate anything, Mister Pothook, I shall cry quits at once, and have done with you," said the owner of the reticule and tawdry, with some real or feigned indignation in her manner.

"Well, happen sooner an' betther," rejoined Pothook. "Theaw's gan me straight tips till I've welly bin tipt i'th' warkheawse. I've bin winnin' mooar brass this yer nor a wheelbarrow ud howd if thy tips had bin owt t' go by. Neaw I've welly emptied my wareheawse int' owd Jinny cellar [a putty shop* in —— street], an' I've abeawt threehawpence laft for t' carry on Whissundy."

It must here be observed that our old acquaintance Pothook had, during a severe and prolonged panic in the silk trade, "emigrated" to Manchester, and set up the business of purveyor of a certain class of delicacies mostly consumed in spirit vaults and beer-houses. For this purpose he had opened a "warehouse,"

* *Putty shop*; an unlicensed pawnshop.

as he called it, in a very narrow street contiguous to Smithfield Market, where he treated his neighbouring merchants to a daily feast upon the odour proceeding from the preparation of “hot peas,” fried fish, and pickled mussels; adding, on certain occasions, tripe and trotters to the repast. He had been in the habit of “investing” a moiety of the profits accruing from this business on the uncertain virtues of horseflesh, led on by the incentives which his neighbour “Fan,” who was a “tipster” on a small scale, contrived to have at her command. The sinking of the profits in these absorbing speculations led to portions of the stock being appropriated to the same purpose, until the pea-can, tripe-basket, boiling-pan, a ricketty table, and a three-legged stool—the best of his *plant* and furniture, had followed each other to the dingy precincts of “Old Jinny’s” cellar, where they were held in pledge for a fourth of their value advanced to Pothook for the purpose mentioned. Becoming bankrupt, he cast about among his cronies, who mostly carried on a miscellaneous trade,

and was at length enabled, by their united assistance, to commence business as a vendor of “handicap books” and lead pencils, where we have found him—again at the lowest ebb of fortune.

“Well,” observed Fan, commiserating the attenuated circumstances of her friend, “I’d a bit of luck yesterday ; I got lots of stamps for tips ; besides, I drew ‘Herne’ in a sweep, and sold it for half-a-crown ; so if you like, I’ll stand twopennoth for you, being as you’re skinned.”

“Did t’ draw Herne, dost say ?” Pothook eagerly inquired.

“Yes, Herne ; they say it’s no good,” was the reply.

“By owd Sam,” exclaimed Pothook, striking his hand with the other, “if I’d a tanner I’d put it upo’ that tit. I yerd some chaps whisperin’ o’er it i’ Aarons, an’ they’rn sayin’ it ud poo it off like owd boots. Theaw’re a swetty, Fan, for sellin’ thy chance. If theaw’ll lend me a bob I’se be a rich mon t’ neet.”

“ Will you pay me back if you win ? ”

“ Ay, th’ fust brass I pay to anybody.”

“ Honour bright ? ”

“ As sure as nails.”

“ The required sum was advanced, which, being increased to thirteen pence halfpenny, these humble votaries of the “ turf ” entered the “ Mill-stone.”

It was not difficult for Pothook to obtain very fair odds against his horse, so he invested his shilling the first opportunity, which caused him to feel as much interest in the race as if he had ventured a thousand pounds upon it. The arrangement fairly concluded betwixt “ book-maker ” and “ backer,” the latter betook himself, in company with his friend, to the enjoyment of his “ twopenneth ” in the vault, where they seated themselves in a snug corner to discourse and speculate upon the probabilities of the forthcoming race.

After descanting in professional terms on the merits and “ performances ” of certain horses—the tricks of jockeys and stable doctor-

ing, along with other matters appertaining to the glorious institution of the turf, they turned upon things of a more private and confidential nature, the elements of which were closely associated with downright scandal, and its accompanying intrigue.

“Mesthur Herbert must win a deeval o’ brass,” observed Pothook, “or else he couldno’ carry on as he does.”

“Why, heaw does he carry on?” his companion inquired, at the same time looking as if she could have answered the question herself.

“Oh, theaw knows, Fan,” replied the other, with a prolonged wink given across his half profile. “He keeps two heawses on i’ th’ teawn here, ut swallown up as mich brass as a church, beside th’ Grange ut he lives at. Then he’s a wife, too, ut nob’dy hardly ever sees, un they sen he hast’ keep brass fro her, or else hoo’d give it a’ away. I wish hoo’d mak’ a mistake sometime, an’ let me get within raich of her hont; we’d have a rare boylin’ o’ paes an’ tripe, Fan,—whorr?”

Fan was too much engaged in examining and sorting the contents of a curiously-made purse to notice the latter observations of her friend, and she merely assented to the other conclusions by a couple of abstracted nods, given slowly and with apparent reserve.

“He’s gooin t’ mak that lad of his int’ a pa’son, they sen,” Pothook continued, “but between thee an me, I think th’ young un’s up to a thing or two hissel. He’s paid mooar brass for a pipe nor a’ my clooas han cost; but he dar no’ tak it whoam for fear his fey-they ud see it. An’ then he’s cooartin’ very strongly, too.”

“Courting, is he?” exclaimed Fan, with apparent curiosity, as she replaced the purse in her bosom. “Is she light-haired and stout?”

“A fat un? Nawe, hoo’s owt but that. Last time I seed her, hoo’re as slim as a greyhound, and had a yed as black as my hat—when it wur black, but neaw it’s as breawn as owd George Hollant stockins;” and thus commenting upon the dilapidated state of his

head-covering, Pothook lighted a short black pipe, and commenced sucking the stem most determinedly.

“Then I’m mistaken in the person,” said Fan. “I met him one day in company with a young lady of quite an opposite description, and of very wealthy parents. I did hear, too, that there had been some marriage arrangement made between the two families. But this is some time ago, and the match may have been broken off.”

“Well,” said Pothook, “I nobbut just yerd a whisper abeawt this tother, an’ ther happen may be nowt in’t. I ha’ no’ bin i’ Irkdale this month or two, an’ ther’s three or four o’ my owd neighbours theere bothern me so mich every time I see ’em, abeawt some brass *they owe me*, ut I welly think I’se never goo agen. I hope ther’s no two-shuttlet wark gooin’ on amung ’em.”

“Two-shuttled work; what do you mean by that?”

“Cooartin, *one* for weddin’, an’ th’ *tother* fort mak a foo’ *on* her.”

“Oh, dear!” sighed Fan, casting her eyes pensively on the floor; “the wickedness and deceit of this world. If my poor father and mother had ever thought that I should come to this——,” and she let fall a brief shower of tears over the memory of better days.

“Drop it, Fan, or else theaw’ll wesh a’t’ paint off thy face,” entreated Pothook, in a compassionate tone. “Ther’s mony a one misst ther tip beside thee; so fret nowt at it. I shouldno like nowt t’ happen to that wench noather, booath for her own an’ owd queer Jakey Robi’son’s sake.”

“You know her then?”

“Know her? I’ve known her ever sin’ hoo’re th’ height o’ that wench theere,” exclaimed Pothook, pointing to a little girl to whom the mother was imparting the first lessons in the art of dram-drinking. “An’ a bonny bit o’ flesh an’ blood hoo is. Owd Jakey thinks mooar *on* her nor he does of a’ th’ heawse beside—pigs, ducks, hens, an’ everythin’.”

“It would be a pity if she *fell*,” observed the other, placing considerable emphasis on the last word.

“*Fell?* what dost meeān? Fan, theaw knows summut mooar nor what theaw’s towd abeawt this; an’ if its nobbut for th’ sake o’ what theaw wur onct, dunno let nowt go wrank for th’ want o’ tellin’.”

“I know nothing *yet*; but perhaps I may get to know something,” said Fan, again heaving a sigh, and putting on a pensive look. “For the present, let’s say nothing more. If you intend going to the races, it’s time you were off. For myself, I’ll stay at home to-day. I have some dread upon me that I cannot shift, and I keep wondering what’s going to happen.”

“Then I’ll be off,” said Pothook, jumping up, and knocking his pipe against the counter. “I meeant do some sportin’ to-day, if I can get into a penny sweep. Mind if I dunna mak a poynt or two afore I come back. Then “bottoming” his “twopennoth,” and bidding his companion “ta, ta!” the light-

hearted fellow threw up a sanguine heel at the door, and was soon merrily rattling his clogs down Shudehill, on his way to Broughton.

Fan, having got rid of her friend, commenced her perambulations of the betting market;—looked round at the “ Bay Horse;” indulged herself with coffee and buttered muffin at the “ Cheshire House;” peeped in at “ Bart’s” to look over the “ tissues;” and as a wind-up to her morning’s business, adjourned with several companions of her own sex to the “ King” vault, where she patronized “ Oyster John” to the extent of threepennyworth of “as purty fish as iver knife hopen’d;” and finally took part in the old farce of shaking heads and pulling faces over *delightful* “ noggins” of whisky-punch, until the whole world seemed to be pouring luck into her lap.

CHAPTER XI.

POTHOOK sped towards the race-ground like a very erratic Mercury ; now and then getting a lift on the steps of a 'bus when the guard happened to be collecting outside fares, and at other times competing with the speed of an overladen spring-cart, or a cab with a sleepy driver. By these means he found himself at the Broughton pay-bridge in the space of that most impossible of all periods "no time," where he managed to get smuggled across the river through the freemasonry expressed by a peculiar movement of his hat, and a wink of recognition to the toll-taker.

Our friend, though one of those unlucky fellows whom "money will not stay with," as we often hear remarked, was nevertheless "up" to various commercial "dodges" probably unknown to our grandes in the neighbourhood

of the Infirmary. He could make a penny where others would miss one, and perhaps lose it again before it had time to warm in his pocket. From this habit of money "scavenging,"—*i. e.*, scraping it up from unlikely places,—he began to look about as soon as he entered the precincts of the course for something out of which he could "punse a meg," as he would term it, and thereby be enabled to back his horse the more strongly.

Several gentlemen of the "Stiggins" cloth, who make an annual practice of attending the races for purposes not named in the programme, were congregated about a number of boards placarded with various inscriptions calculated to excite terror in weak-minded people, and were holding forth to the listless crowd as the latter passed the gates leading to the bridge. Assuming a very demure look, Pothook sidled up to these gentlemen, and accosted one who appeared to be the leader, in a manner that recommended him to the notice of the whole gang.

"I'll liver yo' a theawsunt o' thoose eawt

for thrippunce," he said, pointing to a heap of tracts which lay on a ricketty stall.

Three of the gentlemen looked at each other as if they thought the offer of our friend opened a new field for their peculiar enterprise, and would be a means of relieving them of a considerable share of their work. A bargain was at once struck ; the three speculators agreeing to contribute a penny each out of their own pockets to make up the sum required by their newly-enlisted fellow-worker for the execution of his task. A packet, supposed to contain a thousand "tracts," was therefore handed to Pothook, along with the three-pence, and the little fellow entered upon his duties with an industry that called forth exclamations of delight from his employers.

It would be quite natural for the reader to expect that the three enthusiastic "breakers of images" would be unreservedly sold by their newly-appointed agent, and that the latter, as soon as he got out of sight, would be tempted to dispose of his tracts by wholesale ; but there happens to be more honesty in hu-

man nature than is sometimes given credit for, and here was an instance. The fabulous “pig at a fair” was never more busily engaged in running “in and out” than was Pothook in visiting booths and “brick-bars” whilst delivering his papers; and the most exacting patrons of this kind of missionary work must have complimented the great success achieved by our little friend in his praiseworthy endeavour to supply the crowd with the means of lighting their pipes or cigars.

Whether there would be any greater good resulting from this proceeding than a mere temporary convenience, had nothing to do with Pothook. He was only earning his wages, as others were, without considering the amount of public good likely to accrue from his labour. It certainly did occur to him that amongst a concourse of people excited almost to frenzy by hazardous speculation, few would be inclined to reflect seriously upon texts of Scripture; or if they did reflect at all, it would probably beget a momentary contempt for what, doubtless, are well-intentioned efforts to

counteract the immoral influences of the betting mania. The man who had money at stake thought not of the safety of his soul just then ; and the whole army of “special missionaries,” formed into a solid square, and assailing him with platoons of exhortation, would not have awakened him to the “error of his ways,” or abstracted one iota of the interest he felt in the issue of the day’s proceedings.

Pothook had no sooner emptied his parcel, which he vowed contained a “Yorkshar theawsant” (meaning thereby twice the number originally stated), than he betook himself to where the crowd was thickest and the most excited, as there might be chances of making a few coppers by some stratagem or other, where so much money was constantly changing hands. To a spot close by the grand stand, where people have to squeeze themselves through a narrow, ill-contrived passage, facetiously named by a wag “Amen Corner,” the little fellow, with much pushing and elbowing, made his way, and immediately found himself in the company of several well-known tricksters

of the turf, by whom he was recognized. Here the “dervishes” of sporting life were working themselves into a state of wild excitement, by vociferous invitations to the surging crowd to come and win something from them. Numbers of these were elevated on inverted tubs; others proclaimed their willingness to do business from temporary erections of boards and stakes, whilst the more humble were rushing about from place to place, throwing up their arms, and entreating all lovers of sport to invest on the principal event.

One of the last-named class, a fellow of about 5ft. 2in., but a giant in his own estimation, was endeavouring, with book held up, to make known his willingness to bet “any amount” on the approaching race. Slapping this individual on the shoulder, Pothook suggested that he had better draw himself out like a telescope, otherwise no one would know of his existence: a piece of advice hardly relished by the party to whom it was tendered.

“ You’d better let me get on yer shoul-

ders," said the little turfite, sarcastically, "I could do some business there."

"Theaw'st get on for a bob," returned Pothook, eagerly snatching at the idea; "so meawnt my *Tummy*, neck-saddle fashion, an' I'll show thee little Lunnon i' no time."

"Agreed on," said the other without further hesitation, "so duck yer tuppeny, and up goes the donkey."

"Tip us yor rhino then, or else put in on 'Herne' four to one," said Pothook, bending down to receive his rider.

"All right," responded the other, making hasty memoranda in his book. "So here you are."

Without more ado the little betting man took up his position on his friend's *Tummy*—as the latter termed a slight protuberance betwixt his shoulders—and he was immediately hoisted above most of his fraternity, several of whom had time to give a cheer before the bell was heard to ring.

Pothook and his *fare* had now opportunity of doing a considerable amount of business,

the novelty of the situation attracting people who would otherwise have passed by without noticing them. The little book-maker had now no necessity for exerting his lungs to any great extent, but sat in his *stirrups* booking with all his might, and taking more money than his mouth would hold.

The murmur which had some time been increasing on and about the stands, now swelled into a loud roar, ebbing and flowing as each horse was led out of the "paddock" and cantered playfully past. The "Dervishes" were now more frenzied than ever, and offered reckless terms to all comers, whilst "respectable" speculators, who usually did things coolly, caught the excitement of their inferiors, and held out such advantages to patrons as no doubt induced the latter to flock in shoals to the promised Eldorado. Along the whole line of the course, forming two dark bands that gradually broadened as they neared the goal, the spectators were packing themselves, leaving only a few stragglers here and there who had probably risked nothing except their

necks at the “Amen Corner,” and who consequently felt little interest in the race. Several red-coated horsemen were engaged in riding backwards and forwards at various points, keeping the course clear, and restoring the even line of spectators when it tended to bulge forward into the enclosure, from a too great eagerness to be foremost in the ranks.

During the previous half-hour it had been rumoured that “Herne” had not arrived, and doubts as to his ever coming in time were entertained by many. Still the “money market” showed no material change in “prices;” although people were less anxious to do “business” on the favourite’s account. Our friend the “list” vender began to feel a little uneasiness concerning his investment, and more than once, as the rumour of his horse’s absence gained ground, wished the couple of shillings safely in his own pocket; but he had risked the remaining four pence in as many penny “sweeps,” from one or other of which he hoped to win sufficient to carry him home,

and even then he would be as rich as when he set out ; so what did it matter ?

But the favourite came not, and more intense grew the anxiety in the vicinity of the paddock. Had any one on the grand stand looked across the course towards a cluster of carriages chiefly occupied by members of a nameless order of society, he might have beheld a scene even more exciting than that which was passing around him. There an individual was making engagements that seemed to involve the alternative of a princely fortune or bankruptcy. The wine had freely flowed, and bets were made whilst this wholesale speculator was reeling with intoxication. Wildly he scattered the ashes of his cigar over the heads of those beneath him ; madly and coarsely he raved to the group of whom he formed the centre ; impiously he challenged both divine and infernal power to interfere with his destiny. His fate had been to *win* ever since his first stake was ventured, and Fortune was not the hussy to desert him now.

A small flag at this moment fluttered in

the distance, and gathering about it were the horses that were to contend in the race. Then followed a period of suspense, during which many held their breath, and watched attentively the movements about the grand stand. As yet there was no visible change in the prospect of events ; the starters were getting abreast of each other, and the flag was momentarily expected to signal—"off." Hold ! —There is commotion in the paddock ; a loud shout rends the air ; the crowd divides near the winning-post, and now, lithe as the winged steeds of fable, with nostrils dilating, and neck shot out as if eager for flight, the missing favourite springs upon the course. "Herne" had only just arrived. There was not even time to plate his feet. He must needs run as he had travelled ; and away he went to the "scratch."

The drunken speculator turned deadly pale on hearing the shout, as its significance was too apparent to need interpreting. He had received, the day before, what he deemed a most valuable "tip," to the effect that

“ Herne ” would not be forthcoming when required, and this had induced him to hazard immense sums against the horse. The prospect of the issue was changed in a twinkling on the favourite’s turning up, and the excitement grew more intense than ever.

Now they are off—scampering pellmell—a straggling host; and away with them go visions of suddenly acquired wealth, and grand villas on the green slopes of Kersal. Now they stretch out into a long tail that changes continually in its proportions,—“ Childrey ” leading, closely followed by “ Satinstone,” “ Herne,” and “ Underhand.” The grand stand is passed, and Babelous are the sounds which issue thence to greet the foremost horse. The favourite is still behind, but improving in his position, and streams of perspiration are pouring down a certain face that is painfully turned towards the flying cloud. Nearer and nearer the front—gaining at every spring—sweeps onward the gallant “ Herne.” Now the foremost heads become mingled—they are in a line—one shoots out from amongst the

rest—it is the favourite's—and aerial castles are tumbling around as the repeated shouts of “Herne wins!” strike on the ear. It is all over; the winning-post is gained; the numbers go up; the crowd closes on the course, and “Herne” is proclaimed the victor.

The little betting man had dismounted from his novel stand on the commencement of the race, and was now handing over five shillings in bright, smooth silver to the enriched Pothook, who could hardly believe his senses on seeing himself become suddenly possessed of so much wealth. The latter had beside accepted odds to the extent of five to one before he left town, and this sum would augment his fortune to eleven shillings, less the one he had borrowed from “Fan.” What a “raker” he had made! What a jollification he would have when he returned to town, and what visions of redeemed pea-cans and tripe-baskets floated before him!

Pothook, elated at his success, now turned to leave the course, and had squeezed himself through “Amen Corner,” when he stopped to

consider whether he ought to walk home, or *do* the thing respectably, and 'bus the distance. With such an amount of cash upon his person the latter mode of getting over the journey would be the safest, besides being "nobby," and smacking of legitimate race-going. So deciding at once that he would ride, he made for the nearest conveyance, which was rapidly filling, and jumping on the step, had commenced climbing to the top when he felt a hand pulling rather unceremoniously at his coat-tails.

"Whoa's that ut's howd o' my wings?" demanded the frightened fellow, as he slipped backwards; then turning round, he found himself in the presence of an old acquaintance, who was all over grins at the recognition, and the several exclamations of—

"Dick!"

"Pothook!"

"Owd lad!"—were immediately exchanged between the two.

The person who had seized the list vender by the coat tails was no other than our

youthful acquaintance, Master Richard Robinson, who, to fulfil the intention vowed in a previous chapter, had been spending the afternoon at the races ; and if the two friends did not fall into each other's arms when they met, they shook hands in the warmest manner.

“ An what has theaw bin backin’ ? ” demanded Pothook, giving the other a professionally quizzing look, as he pushed him out of the way of the pressing crowd.

“ Nowt,” replied Dick, dropping his countenance ; “ I nobbut coom eawt o’ th’ road o’ things awhoam.”

“ Why, what’s up ? Thy feyther cross ? Mooar wark nor he con do, an’ wants thee t’ help him ? ”

“ Nawe ; catch my feyther doin’ owt i’ Whissun-week, if he con help it ; an I know nob’dy ut con droive him. Ther’s summut else.”

“ Owt ut consarns everybody ? ”

“ Nawe ; it’s nowt to nob’dy, nobbut—never mind ; I’ll tell thee sometime else.

Let's be gettin' away afore th' road's so thrung. Art' for ridin?"

"Noa neaw I've let o' thee. I want t' ha' some talk wi' thee, an' if theaw's a mind w'en just get o'er th' bridge, an' have a quiet gill t'gether at th' 'Bridge Inn,' or some-wheere. I'm fain t' see thee, lad, that I am." And Pothook gave his friend another shake by the hand.

"Heaw are they a' i'th' Hollow? Is thy feyther hearty, an' thy moather?"

"Ay, for owt I know."

"Does th' owd lad keep gooin' to th' Jumper ov a Sethurday neet, an' gettin' croot pints? Heaw's owd Johnny gettin' on? Has he whitewesht that ale-shot o' mine ut he sed wur a sticker? What's Swinkey doin' on neaw; twinin'-in an' gaitin'? Does owd Saul keep bein' a king yet? I reckon Clinker's made his fortin by this time, an' gan up his smithy to Joe, th' prentis. Joe's a dacent lad; as good a striker as ever lifted a hommer, Clinker sed he wur; an' he could hondle a piece o' hoyn like a battin'-rod."

Dick found it difficult to answer all these questions, put as they were in a breath, and without order. He, however, sorted them as well as he could, and gave such answers to the foremost as accorded with his knowledge. He was getting down to Clinker and the smithy, when a cry of "Stand aside!" was shouted in the rear, and repeated along the route.

Immediately a tumult arose; people sprang hastily from the crowded carriage-way upon the still more crowded foot-path. 'Bus drivers were swearing, and casting uneasy glances behind; pedestrians looked terrified, and pressed each other against the fence,—when, amidst a cloud of dust, his horses galloping at the utmost speed, and swerving to and fro as if the reins were held by a madman, the drunken turf speculator, whom we have before met with, was seen to come dashing along the road. Fearfully the horses plunged and reeled; the carriage bounded and rolled as if the next pitch would hurl it from the road into the river, which it was approaching;

and neck-or-nothing it swept over the bridge, and was soon out of sight and hearing.

“If that isno’ Mesthur Herbert,” observed Dick, in amazement at the audacity of the spectacle, “I dunno’ know him. What does theaw say, Pothook; is nor it him?”

“It’s him ut *wur*,” replied the other; “but I think he’s someb’dy else to-day. He’s bin winnin’ heavily, I’ll bet owt.”

“Or happen *losin’*,” suggested Dick.

“*Losin’*? He never loses: he’s too weel dipt i’th’ brimstone pot for t’ lose.

“What dost meeān by that?”

“Well, I think he’s consarns wi’t’ *Owd Lad*,” said Pothook in a suppressed tone, and giving the other a look full of dark insinuations. “He’s sich luck as never nob’dy had before—skins a’ he comes nee, whether at racin’, or cards, or billiards, or no matther what. He’s a perfect, double-meawnted, go-ahead, stick-at-nowt—”. Pothook finished the sentence by pointing significantly towards his toes, the meaning of which action was easily gathered by his companion.

The two had now arrived at the Bridge Inn, where we will leave them for the present, enjoying their “quiet gills,” and discoursing upon matters which affected the principal characters connected with this story.

CHAPTER XII.

UPON a slight, green eminence, which overlooks the Irk where it winds round to receive its principal tributary, stands a solitary mansion, that by some freak of its owner's invention has been named the "Grange." It is a fine-looking, if not an elegant structure, composed principally of brick, and is of comparatively modern date. Many windows stud the front, which is deeper than the back, from its being built partially upon the slope, and a high, pointed roof gives it some pretensions to the Gothic style of architecture. A long, narrow window lights the staircase, the several landings being indicated by as many lightly-constructed balconies projecting from them. From the uppermost of these balconies a fine view of the country looking towards Cheetham and Crumpsall may be obtained; as well as

the windings of the Irk, whose stream at this point is comparatively clear. There is an ostentatious display of dry fountains, plaster Cupids, and nude goddesses scattered about the grounds ; and half-concealed fawns and satyrs peep from amongst tangled shrubberies, which form two crescents on each side of the lawn.

Everything about the mansion would seem to indicate the wealth of the owner, as waste rather than taste is expressed in the lavish manner by which ornamentation has been attempted. Few people had access to the house at the time of which I write, as the occupants, when at home, preferred to lead a moderately secluded life ; and, when we consider the class of profession by which the establishment was supported, this preference for retirement need not be wondered at.

Upon the uppermost balcony were two ladies seated, watching the gambols of the school children, who were playing on the opposite slope. One was a delicate-looking person, of some forty summers, who had at

one time been beautiful, and was still “fair to behold.” But there was an anxious expression upon her countenance that apparently nothing could dispel, and this detracted in some degree from looks that would otherwise have been more than ordinarily interesting.

The other was a different person altogether, with a blooming, cheerful face, that scarcely ever changed its expression, and an eye that seemed to be flashing everywhere at once from its unceasing roll, as it glanced from her companion, and swept the prospect which the position commanded. This lady was not of the class termed beautiful, nor were her hands of those delicate proportions that would become an amber glove, or the newest style of fan; yet there was so much that was pleasing about her person and temperament as to make ample amends for what nature had denied her in another form.

“I wonder,” observed the latter person, apparently resuming a conversation that had been interrupted, “that you take so little interest in Mr Herbert’s affairs. I should be

delighted, I'm sure, if I thought George had the spirit to give up his miserable profession and take to betting altogether. What is a paltry three hundred a-year, when people whom I know, and who were not at one time worth a straw, are now making their thousands."

"Oh, Mrs Lightoller," replied the other lady, in her usual pensive mood, "it is not *all gold that glitters*, as you know. Better have a little and a good conscience, than acquire wealth at the expense of every principle that ennobles human nature."

"But is there nothing respectable or honest in betting?"

"Respectable there may be, according to some people's ideas of respectability, and I am even willing to allow that there is honesty to be met with amongst sporting men; but when I see people rise in the profession in spite of every exigency, 'coining money,' as the vulgar term it, I am forced to conclude that there is something more than mere luck at the bottom of their transactions."

“ And amongst these you would class your own husband.”

“ What Mr Herbert is rests with his Maker and his own conscience, and not with my opinion. We cannot make exceptions to principle in favour of those whom we love. My husband, I admit, has been fortunate ; but his fate may have a turn, and I sometimes shudder when I think of the homes that have been ruined—the families brought to want, the feelings outraged, to supply the means for our aggrandizement, and that there may come a day when justice will avenge herself and reverse the picture.”

“ Oh, Mrs Herbert, you are getting too sentimental for this world ? Do not we all live one upon another who are reputed honest and respectable in society ? Look you here : Mr Lightoller is cashier in a warehouse. His employers—their people, as he calls them—trade upon the necessities of poorer firms. If business be good, then all is right ; but if it be bad, why then small capitalists, who cannot afford to stand still, are forced to make

bargains with more wealthy tradesmen that eventually drive them into the Bankruptcy Court, which I regard as a legal institution set up to rob honest people. Now which is the worst—taking advantage of in one instance, or duping you in the other? For the soul of me I can't make out the difference."

"Mrs Lightoller, if you would introduce one species of error on purpose to give countenance to another, you remove the premises upon which I base my arguments. I contend that both are wrong, notwithstanding the legality and the impunity which gives them the appearance of right; and I would rather be a beggar, carrying my crust in my satchel, than occupy a position that depended on either, *if I were at liberty to choose*. God only knows what I suffer when I reflect upon the events of the last fifteen years. It is a wild dream to me—full of splendour, full of woe; the *light* only dazzling—the *shade* black as death. I feel unusually depressed to-day, and can only account for it by the incessant fears I entertain that any moment we may be

plunged in irretrievable ruin. The sight of the children playing in yonder field makes me even more melancholy, for they remind me of a time when I was as innocent as they are, and as light-hearted as they appear to be."

It was a scene to remind the guiltiest of days of innocence—was that which now drew Mrs Herbert's attention from more unpleasant reminiscences. But why need the lady be sad? Surely so generous-hearted and pure-minded a being hath no "cupboard" in even the remotest corner of her memory in which a "skeleton" could hide. All Irkdale could attest the kindness of her disposition. When oaths loud and deep called down curses upon the head of her husband, the same lips would utter a prayer for blessings upon her. Little children, as they passed the gates, would peep through the bars to see if their benefactress was walking in the grounds. They knew there would be a smile and a kind word for them, if not something more; but if they heard the gruff voice that indicated

the presence of her lord and master, they would run scared down the lane, and afterwards communicate in mysterious whispers their fears that “Owd Mungo” was at their heels.

But the scene that was going on opposite the “Grange.” The cricket bat gave out its lively “thuds ;” the ball rolled or flew on provoking unmindfulness of who was “in” or who was “out ;” and players were sweating like haymakers in the broiling sun. Girls, who would have taken offence at being called such, chased each other for lack of more desirable companions, and little boys were boisterously emulous over the pleasant occupation of reducing the number of their buttons. Others of the school party of more sedate tastes strolled here and there, or seated themselves beneath the shade of a sycamore,—singing hymns and eating currant bread, in happy unenviousness of more active amusements. Two of the latter party, who by some manœuvre unknown to any discipline out of Love’s school, have separated themselves from

the rest, are enjoying a quiet walk by the river. School festivities appear to be forgotten by these two, as they seek the more secluded nooks of the valley to avoid observation. They are now as near to the "Grange" as they can approach without crossing the stream, and both the eyes of Mrs Herbert and those of her companion are watching their movements.

"That is Alfred, or I'm much mistaken," observed Mrs Lightoller, alluding to one of the young people by the river.

"Strange; I didn't know my own son," said Mrs Herbert, smiling,—"but I begin to think with you it can be no other. Who is the young lady?"

"You ought to know best, Mrs Herbert; —I have never heard of his being engaged," replied Mrs L., in a pettish tone, as if it had occurred to her that something had been kept from her knowledge that ought not to have been.

"You know as much as I about Alfred's being engaged," said the other lady, some-

what astonished at the tone her companion had assumed. “ If there is a connection existing of that kind, I assure you I am totally ignorant of it. Alfred is too young to think of such a thing.”

“ Too young, indeed! He’s an older bird than you take him to be;—much older in some things.” And Mrs Lightoller put on a very knowing and confidential air.

“ Why, what do you know of him?”

“ Oh nothing, nothing; it was only a careless remark of mine,—no meaning at all in it.”

“ But there must be more meaning in it than you would have me think, or you would not have made the observation,” Mrs Herbert insisted, with some alarm expressed in her manner.

“ Appearances are not always in favour of people, and I may be wrong in this instance, still I always took Alfred to be a forward boy;” and Mrs Lightoller sought to drop another hint by the expression of careless in-

difference which was conveyed in the toss of her head.

“I have not had the slightest reason for supposing him to be a forward boy,” urged Mrs Herbert. “He is of too modest and retiring disposition, so far as I have seen of him, to have given me any serious alarm concerning his future conduct; but I must acknowledge that mothers don’t see all. Was not that the back-door bell?”

Both ladies listened for several moments.

“I didn’t hear it,” observed Mrs Lightoller. “Your fancy makes bell-wires, I think, at which your fears are constantly pulling. Do you expect any one?”

“Only my husband, and yet I dread his coming; but why I dread it I know not,” and Mrs Herbert pressed her hand to her bosom, as if to still the flutterings of her heart.

“That is a pretty dress of yours, Mrs Lightoller, neatly trimmed, and the fit so beautiful. Who’s been your makers,—the bazaar people?”

“No,” replied the lady, blushing. “I

can't afford to purchase at your grand places. Mr L. bought the silk as a wedding-day present, and I got a young person to make it for me."

" Well, I must say that I am quite in love with it," observed Mrs Herbert. " Who is this young person ? "

" She's a Miss Wilson, lives with her grandfather, a Mr Robinson, up in Irkdale. She's a nice sort of body, very clever at the needle, and, I assure you, she gets plenty of work."

" Miss Wilson ! There goes the bell. I'm not mistaken this time. Oh Mrs Lightoller, —I feel so taken ! "

The lady was right. The back-door bell rung violently, and an angry voice sounded from below. It was Mr Herbert's voice, though unusually deep and husky ; and ere its tones had ceased to grate upon the ear, a heavy footstep was heard upon the stair.

CHAPTER XIII.

IF Pothook really expected to obtain a “quiet gill” at the “Bridge Inn,” he was much mistaken in his calculations; for the house was literally besieged by people who appeared not to care if they could get rough pints, and the selection of a corner wherein to sit down was a matter of some difficulty. At length, squeezing himself behind a table, and dragging his companion after him, our sporting friend managed to edge himself into a seat, whence he looked round at the company with the air of one who was about to do something grand. Several nods of recognition were exchanged betwixt him and others of the “fraternity,” whilst invitations to a “glass” or “twopennorth,” or a “springer,” were freely given by people who possessed more money than might have been expected from their

appearance. These civilities Pothook declined, preferring to share his winnings with his friend, if only for the sake of old acquaintance.

“ Theaw sees, Dick, what it is to be a public charikter,” he observed, giving an independent knock on the table. “ Neaw, I could have as mich dhrink as I could carry whoam i’ my pea-can, an’ at other folks’ expense, too ; but if I wur t’ ax ‘em to lend me tuppence for t’ get a meawthful o’ summut t’ ate, they’d stare at me an’ slap their hont o’ their pocket same as if they thowt I’re gooin’ t’ rob ‘em. Neaw is not that queer ? ”

Dick admitted the case was “ rayther queer,” but forbore to make any further comment upon it.

“ I’ve found mony a queer thing eawt sin’ I left th’ Hollow,” Pothook continued, “ an’ some on ‘em ud mak thee stare. As lung as one lives in a nice quiet nook, same as yore heawse, Dick, an’ gets a’ one wants, an’ sees nob’dy else wantin’, we think th’ woald’s gooin’ on as reet as a wooden clock ; but come

cawt o'th' dur, an' look abeawt thee abit, an' if t' doesno' find it eawt ut theaw's bin wearin' blinkers a' thy life ut'll nobbut let thee see what's at th' eend o' thy nose, I'm a—I'm a—pot-cat, an' that's a' abeawt it."

How it could be supposed that he had been wearing "blinkers" all his life, or what reference they could have to his friend's being transformed into a "pot-cat," was quite a puzzler to Dick Robinson, and if that was the only information he was to be favoured with, they had little need of a "quiet gill" over it. But youth is so impatient.

"Well," observed the latter, "that may be a' true; I hanno seen so mich i' my time, an' I'm happen no wurr for it; but theaw sed theaw'd summut particular to tell me. What is it like?"

"Oh, I'se come to it c'enueaw, if theaw'll nobbut wait a bit," replied Pothook, complacently. "If theaw'd a rope reawnd thy neck, an' a bit o' timber under thy feet, theawd noa be i' sich a hurry, I con tell thee. I meeant' gie thee a lesson or two ut theaw'll noa find i'

no book thy feyther has ; becosse book writers known nowt abeawt sich like things. Neaw we'ren ust we could ha' towd which had won an' which had lost ; becosse one ud ha' sheawted like mad, an' th' tother ud ha' lookt as blue as a dyer's clog ; but neaw it ud puzzle a pickpocket for t' tell which wur which, an' he'd happen mak a blunder if he made a gex at it. Theaw sees yon young felly under th' window—him wi' abeawt a yard o' ribbin to his cap, an' his yure abeawt as straight as if it had bin commd wi'a stoo-foowt.”

“ Ay, well, I see him,” replied Dick, impatiently.

“ Well,” said Pothook, “ theaw sees he's as quiet as an owd sheep, an' favvers wonderin' what he could spend th' last threehawpence on. Neaw I da'say that chaps mooar brass in his pocket nor thy feyther has i'th' owd stockin'—an' I know th' owd lad has a rare hutch laid by,—for a' ut he looks so gawmless; an' ten to one that swell ut sits next to him wi' as mony rings on his fingers as ud' wed a' Irkdale, un favvers he're gooin' to order bottles

o' wine for everybody, has nor as mich brass on him as ud pay th' tow-bars for a walkin'-stick."

"I should ha' takken him t' be quite a gentleman, by th' looks on him," Dick remarked, alluding to the person last pointed out.

"An' so no deawt he is," said Pothook, "but at th' same time, one of a fast sort ; gets money off his moather ut his feyther knows nowt abeawt, an' spends it on a lot o' scamps ut never did wortch for ther livin', and never will. In a while his feyther'll happen ha't goo a bein' white-wesht, an' that's road th' woald goes on."

"It must be a queer woald then," observed the other, forgetting his own affairs in momentary wonder at the strange life his companion seemed to be acquainted with.

"Queer ! It shads Guilliver ut thy feyther ust read abeawt. Neaw, ther's that chap theere," and Pothook pointed out a rather stout individual, with a very red face and heavy eyes, who was lazily mixing a tumbler of

brandy-and-water, “what would theaw tak him to be ? ”

“ A butcher,” Dick replied.

“ Nay,” said Pothook, “ I’ll bet thee a guinea to a hay-seed ut theaw’ll find no scrats upo’ his honds. Ther as smoot as a meawdy-wart, I’ll peawnd thee.”

“ Well, what is he then ? ”

“ He’s what they coen a *plant*,” said Pothook, in a half-whisper.

“ A *plant* ! What’s that ? ”

“ He goes abeawt runnin’ foowt races, an’ *taks folk in*.”

“ *Him* a race-runner ! I shouldno ha’ thowt he could lift boooth feet off th’ greawnd at onct.”

“ Nawe, that’s just wheere it is. If theaw wur t’ see him crossin’ th’ street, theaw’d think he couldno’ get eawt o’th’ road of a sond-barrow ; but when he’s a match on he melts hissel deawn same as thy moather does swine’s grease, till his cloas hang on him like mop rags, an’ he’s as wrinklet abeawt th’ shoothers as an owd pair o’ leather breeches. When

he's stript for t' run, folk woudno' believe he're th' same mon, if it wurno' for his yed bein' flattent wi' tuppin' chimney-pieces for quarts o' ale. Well, we'n say his backers han gettn ther money on, an' happen he's a two-thri yards start, through lookin' so unlikely. When they set off he goes like a greyheawned, an' knocks his mon eawt o' time like owd boots, an' then th' tother side find it eawt they'n bin *sowd*, an' takken in as bad as a yorney at an eawl-catchin'."

"But I should think," observed Dick, "ut they'd be gettin' up to him, an' ut he'd ha' no chance o' takkin' 'em in a second time."

"That's just wheere theaw'rt eawt on't," replied Pothook, "an' shows theaw'd be catcht o' th' blynt side in a snifter. He taks care never to run *twice* i' one place, an' changes his name as oft as he runs; but it's a wonder he's sense to do, too; for one time he're deawn i' Staffyshur, an' swaggerin' heaw he could run, when some chaps, seein' ut he're abeawt hawve rockt, made it up fort' have him on th' stick a bit. They matcht him fort' run

agen time, reawnd four lones ut went into one another, an' made a sort of a cooarse. He wur to go *one time* reawnd for ten shillin' and a gallon o' ale, if he did it i' ten minits. Well, he stript, an' off he went same as if he'd never stop agen till he're made, an' as soon as he geet eawt o'th' seet, th' chaps went an' hud thersels at th' back of a hedge, an' waited for ther mon comin'. E'enneaw, Hop-bag—that's what they coen him—darts past, puffin' an' blowin' like a steeam-hingun, an' starin' furrud same as if he thowt he should never be reawnd. On he went, eawt o'th' seet agen, an' when he coom reawnd the *second time*, th' chaps had gotten i'th' lone agen, just same as if they'd never stirred fro' th' startin' place. Well, they sed he' bin *twenty* minits i'th' race, an' lost by a wide mark; so Hop-bag put his clooas on, an' gan in ut he'd fairly lost; an' fro' that day to this he does no' know but what roads i' Staffyshur are twice as lung as they are here. He hadno' sense to find it eawt ut he'd run twice reawnd i'sted o' onct; an it's believt ut if th' chaps had tarried at

th' back o' th' hedge, or gone away a' together, he'd ha' bin runnin' neaw. Well, th' mon has plenty o' brass, as big a leatheryed as he is ; so it isno' th' wisest o' folk ut makken th' best eawt i'th woald. Come, we'n just have another gill, an' then we'n be treddlin' toart whoam. Theaw'll be gooin' o'er by Cheetham Hill, I reckon."

" Ay," replied the other, with an impatient gesture, " but theaw promist to tell me summut else—summut ut consarns me, as I understood."

" Oh, ay, I did," replied Pothook, seeming to recollect himself, but yet in no hurry to engage in important disclosure. " Well, fro' what I've towd thee a'ready, theaw munna be surprist if theaw doesno' find folk are what theaw took 'em to be. ' Civil soos aten o'th' draf,' as one's yerd it sed, an' folk ut carryn very smoot faces han sometimes rough insides. I know a thing or two, mon. Ther's folk ut talk very leawdly abeawt others noa bein' as they should be, ut are very pon-an'-kettlish thersels. I've seen 'em throw deawn ther

brass for bottles o' wine, an' get so bandy-leggt they'n had t' be takken whoam like a looad o' porritoes, an' that after stretchin' ther face at a meetin' for t' see what they con do toart reformin' poor folk. Neaw look at Mesthur Herbert; ther's nob'dy 'ud think when they seen him at th' church ov a Sunday, ut he'd as mich to do wi' th' *owd Lad* as he has. An' then ther's that skitterwit of a son of his, as straight as a new pin he is when he' awhoom, an'—”

“ What, Alfred ? ”

“ Ay, Alfred. Theaw wouldno think to look at him ut he's abeawt as wakken as a weezle, an' has as mony wenchies runnin' after him as 'ud fill a fact'ry.”

“ Nawe,” gasped Dick, a thousand jealous fears flashing upon his mind, “ but believe ther's summut between him an' eawr Ade-laide.”

“ That's just what I'm comin' to,” said Pothook, with the manner of one who was confident of being right; “ I've had a tip abeawt it, an' between thee an' me, I think hoo'd

betther ha' followed her feyther to Ameriky nor even ha' gone to Irkdale Church Skoo—not ut I think ther's owt bad abeawt skooin', but i' my mind lads an' wenches han no right to go to th' same place. They gettn agate o' lookin' one at another i'stid o' mindin' ther books, an' it's wo-up with lasses when they begin o' scentin' ther handkerchers, an' framin' themselves same as if ther'n aulus at a lookin'-glass. I've bin surprist, Dick, ut theaw's had no mooar gumption abeawt thee nor what theaw's shown yet."

"Pothook," said Dick, looking thoughtfully at his friend, "I've aulus thowt other folk wur betther nor mysel, an' never felt like one ut a lass' ud care abeawt spakin' to; an' I've sometimes sit starin' at eawr Addy till hoo's lookt as far off me as if I'd bin lookin' through th' wrang eend of a telescope. I've seen her sit sheawin' (sewing) o'th' ha'stone of a neect till I felt as if hoo'd stitcht me fast to th' stoo'; an' I could as soon ha' lickt th' eend of a red-wot foyer-potther as ha' spokken to her owt consarnin' cooartin'."

“Theaw’d rayther hoo’d ha’ sed summut to thee, I reckon.”

“Well, it is not i’ my natyer, I believe, for t’ do owt like other folk ; an’ when I’ve seen lads runnin’ deawn hedge-sides after ther bits o’ snickets, or pee-weetin’ abeawt heawse-eends, I’ve felt ut if they’d put a brass collar reawnd my neck, an’ crom me int’ a dog-kennel, an’ say ‘Sus’ when they wanted me to come eawt, I should be abeawt as mich use to th’ woald as ever I should ha’ bin lose. Nawe, Pothook, I have no gumption abeawt me. But what dost’ know partikilar abeawt yung Herbert ? ”

“Well, it’s just here,” said the other, drawing an imaginary line upon the table, “I see mooar on him than what I should if he’re gooin’ upo’ th’ reet tack. He spends mooar brass nor his wages come to, I know ; an’ he’s a tidy screw. Heaw he gets howd on’t is another thing, an’ happen it’s what he could hardly tell hissel’. I met him one neet, when I’re eawt wi’ tripe an’ sheep’s heels, at a place wheere they sell mooar dhrink by gasleet nor

they dun i'th daytime. He sit wi' a bottle o' *red ink* afore him, an' a lot o' chaps helpin' him. He begun o' cryin' like a newbyett'n chilt when he see'd me, an' begged like a cripple at a gate ut I wouldno tell his feyther. That wur abeawt th' start; theaw sees. Well, another time I met him i'th' same shop; but he didno' *cry* this time, but hoped I would no' leet on to th' *guv'ner*. He're gettin' on then. It wurno' mony weeks after afore I met him agen, as merry, he wur, as a cricket, an' gobblin' up oysters by barrowfulls, an knockin' champaigne abeawt like smo'drink. Well, i'sted *on* him bein' gloppent when he see'd me, an beggin' *on* me fort' know nowt, he slapt me on th' back, and coed me Owd Cockylorum, an' axt me t' warm my nose o'er a noggin' o' whisky punch. He'd getten hardent by this time, theaw sees, like mony a one beside him at's gone th' wrung road, an' happen ended ther spree wheere they sleep upo' wooden fithers. If ther isno' a screw lose theere afore lung, it'll cap my rags."

“ Poor Addy ! ” exclaimed Dick, in a

melancholy tone. “ If owt happens her my feyther ’ll goo beside hissel. But I conno’ yet think so badly o’ young Herbert. He comes wi’ sich a nice smile on his face when he meets one,—just for a’th’ world like Adelaide hersel,—ut I couldno help thinkin’ to-day they favvert bein’ made for one another.”

“ That’s wheere th’ danger lies,” said Pot-hook ; “ if he’d bin as ragged an’ hard favvert as me, theaw met ha’ gone to bed wi’ a yessy crop. But I never knew mony nice yung chaps—specially if they’d a bit o’ brass—but what had ther yed a bit turnt, an’ ne’er gan sich like as thee an’ me a chance o’ havin’ a dacent wench for a wife.”

“ Well, theaw knows mooar abeawt these things nor I do,” said Dick, mournfully. “ I’m nobbut a poot yet, an’ happen a bit gawmless. I dunno know heaw it is, but o’ someheaw I feel just neaw ut if Alfred ’ud wed Adelaide straight forrud, an’ mak her as good a husband as hoo desarves ; an’ if they’d lemme goo to ther heawse neaw an’ agen, an’ be a brother to her,—penklin’ abeawt th’ heawse

an' th' garden, and doin' bits o' jobs for 'em, so as I shouldno be far off her,—I could be content for t' live just as I am till me yed wur as white as a moss-crop ; an' if hoo'd just hap th' clooas to my back when I're deein', I could shutter eawt o'th' woald as yessily as gooin' to sleep after a hay-makkin', an' be as if I never had bin at a'."

Our young friend, after thus delivering himself, threw his head upon the table, and burying his face in his cap, gave way to a quiet flood of tears. His companion, observing this, shook him by the shoulder, and sturdily remonstrated with him for exhibiting his weakness before people.

"Come, Dick," he said, "this is no place for thee to ring thy dish-cleawt in. Mop up, an' let's be gooin'. Look heaw folk are starin' at thee. Ther's mooar nor one wench i'th' country."

The young man raised his head, wiped his eyes with the lining of his cap, and said— "Pothook, I wonder if they'd ha' me for a sodier ? "

“A sodier behanged, theaw’rt too good t’ be shot at yet. I reckon mysel hardly ripe for peawther, an’ I’m like a dried apple-cork at th’ side o’ thee. Never talk abeawt sodierin’ till theaw loses thy wits, an’ then it ’ll matter nowt. I’ll tell thee what to do:—if theaw happens to come to th’ teawn anytime soon, just co at my wareheawse, an’ I’se happen be able to tell thee summut mooar.”

“Wheere is thy *wareheawse*?” inquired the other, with the faintest smile upon his face.

“Number forty-one an’ a hawve A. — street, no *floor* at a’, but deawn some steps into a place ut keeps what I sell cool an’ sweet. It’s rayther dark inside, but theaw’s no ’casion to be feeart o’ brakin’ thy shins agen th’ furnitur, as I’ve lent a good deal on’t eawt to my neighbours. If t’ conno’ find th’ place, just go i’ Tummuses-street, an’ ax th’ fust two theaw meets stondin’ t’gether wheere th’ Transcendental Tripe an’ Trotter Warehouse is, an they’n tell thee.”

“I think I con find it,” said Dick, and the

two rose from their seats, then shaking hands warmly at the door, and promising such renewals of acquaintance as implied frequent meetings at the “warehouse,” departed each their way homeward.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE Grange had never before been visited by so terrible an apparition as the one presented to the ladies whom we left on the stairs two chapters ago. Had it not been for his clothes, and the peculiar cut of his beard, no one would have recognized in the visitor the owner of the mansion, such was the change that had come over him. He had been an easy, dashing, sprightly man in his time, with a strong nerve and a cool, determined manner—steady at a purpose, and unflinching in an extremity. He rarely took wine before supper-time, and then only in quantities that never interfered with his daily avocations; consequently, he went about his “business” with the mechanical exactitude of a bill-broker, and was equally punctilious over his engagements. He had a ready smile and

winning address, which, with the suavity of his general behaviour, made friends of people who disliked his profession. But the Mr Herbert of the present chapter was another being. One day's debauch seemed to have brought on the infirmities of years, and he stood before his wife the wreck of a man. His eyes were red, piercing, and restless, and his body shook betimes as if with convulsions. There was not a line of his features that had not *fiend* written in it; and as he threw his wild glances about, resting at last upon a mirror—the reflected image from which made him recoil as if from a spectre—he uttered a groan so agonizing that the ladies shrank from his presence in the utmost terror.

It was a scene not to be forgotten. Drunkenness, such as nothing but liquid fire fermented by juices infernal might have produced, was consuming him,—burning up his vitals as with a scorching flame. For a moment he stood erect, but shaking like a tower that is being undermined and about to fall. It was the struggle of strong manhood fight-

ing against sudden dissolution. The last foundation-stone had not yet been removed, but the fabric was tottering ; the spoiler had grasped him, though the fangs were not yet upon his heart. Fearful was the oath that trembled on his lips, though yet unspoken, as if Heaven had lent one drop of mercy to save his soul from utter perdition. A sunbeam, shot from an opening cloud, hung upon his face a moment ; his eyes closed upon it, then reeling round as if hurled by an invisible power, he fell prostrate on the stair, uttering that terrible word “beggar!”—the key to that day’s mystery.

The face which but an hour ago glowed with russet crimson, as if health held high revel there, was now pale as a block of marble ; the lips were rigid, the hands clenched, and but for the intermittent tremor which shot through every limb, no one would have supposed him to have been still living.

It was as our friend Dick Robinson surmised. Mr Herbert had lost heavily on the race—so heavily, indeed, that his whole estate

would not cover his liabilities. He had betted on the non-appearance of "Herne" at the time of starting. The misconstruction of a private telegram, which was read off "Middlesbro'" instead of "Middleton," seemed to place the "favourite" at such a distance from Manchester on the morning of the race, that it would have required almost lightning speed to bring him up in time for running. The "blackleg" had thus fallen into a trap which he would at any time have set for his dearest friend, had his ingenuity been capable of devising such a trick, and the consequence was as is here related. Let us leave this wreck for a time.

* * * *

The sun is already on high; but his rays pierce not the thick curtains which fold darkly over a window looking eastward from the Grange. In the room is the solemnity of death; the dim light scarcely revealing the ghostlike shadow of a female form as it silently moves to and fro. Not a sound breaks the stillness, save now and then a suppressed

groan, and the faint murmuring of lips that burn with thirst. Upon the bed is stretched, or huddled, a being that neither sleeps nor wakes, yet is not dead, dead as we record it in our mortality returns, but dead to hope, and love, and the purer delights of life ; dead to honour, shame, and the nobler virtues that make man great and good and happy.

Death itself has fewer terrors than the sleep of madness. The fitful starting from some horrid dream, and the awaking to a reality scarcely less terrible : to be unconscious of that which is passing around, yet having a vivid memory of the past, out of which come stalking deeds long buried, taunting us with their presence. What can the sleep of the tomb be to this purgatory before death ?

Mr Herbert had lain in an unconscious state during the night, and notwithstanding that medical aid promptly arrived, it was long doubtful whether he would survive the shock his system had received. In the morning the faintest symptoms of a return of consciousness

were observed ; but his mind still rambled about old things and old associations ; and he muttered incoherencies that seemed to have some deep meaning hidden beyond them ; and he would pronounce names that made the lady start, as if the dead had risen from their graves and suddenly appeared before her.

“ I saw him yesterday,” he said ; “ I am sure it was he—alive and well, too. Hasn’t he been here ? ”

“ Who, Charles, who ? ”

“ Nobody. Where am I ? where—where ? Who are you ? ”

“ Your wife.”

“ No ; no—water ! —let me drink ! What was that noise ? ”

“ The school children—I promised them buns and milk on the lawn to-day, and forgot to send word that you were unwell. I must tell them you can’t bear a noise.”

“ Don’t, don’t ! Let them sing, laugh, shout, romp ; it will drive some of these things away that crowd so about me. Is Alfred with them ? ”

“ He is. I durst not let him know of your misfortunes.”

“ Good boy ; good boy ! He will be what his father ought to have been. Had his mother lived, I might have been a better man.”

“ Have I not been kind to you, Charles, that you should say so ? ”

“ Oh, it isn’t that ; it isn’t that. It is something else. Were the dice loaded I threw with last ? ”

“ My dear, you have thrown no dice. You’ve been dreaming.”

“ It was for a ring, a diamond ring. Was it not ? Yes, that was the stake.”

The lady gave a start.

“ It was hellish play that ; and I won more than the ring ; I won an eternal curse.”

“ The ring ! What ring ? ”

“ That,—there,—on that villain’s finger in the picture.”

Just then the voices that had been heard on the lawn burst forth with the hymn—

My God, the spring of all my joys,
The life of my delights;
The glory of my brightest days,
And comfort of my nights;

In darkest shades, if thou appear,
My dawning is begun;
Thou art my soul's bright morning star,
And thou my rising sun.

Sweetly the hymn rose and swelled over the valley, now sung by a few infant voices, and anon by the united choir; and as their tones were wafted in currents of harmony to the sick chamber, their influence was as balm to the troubled conscience.

“If my life is not now to close,” said Mr Herbert, in a lucid moment, “I should like to live the rest as a child.”

He was fast sinking into childhood then. The blow, if it had not killed, had laid him prostrate for ever. As Charles Herbert, Esq., gamester, spendthrift,—more, if I thought proper to name it,—he was never to be known again.

As the hymn progressed, the wretched man calmly closed his eyes; some of his

wonted colour returned to his cheek ; his hands ceased to grasp at unseen objects, but were folded over his breast ; the slight motion of his lips bore the utterances of prayer, and sleep—the sleep of peace, brief though it might be—fell upon him.

Sunday morning came, and found the lady still watching by the side of her patient. No carriage passed that day through Irkdale. There was wondering amongst the congregation at church, and Jacob Robinson looked in vain over his garden gate for the appearance of the well-known horses that at the usual hour swept so majestically round the garden.

“Strange,” thought Jacob, as he waited long after the bells had ceased ringing. “I never misst ‘em afore,” he said ; “an’ at a time, too, ut above any other I wanted t’ see ‘em. Ther’s summutter up, mun be.”

The doings at the Grange were not long a secret. The betting circle was the wrong

place to favour its keeping, and the servants at the mansion were only ordinary mortals, and, as a matter of course, prone to gossiping. No wonder, then, that ere Sabbath evening closed it was told in every house in Irkdale that Mr Herbert was a ruined man ; that he had made betting engagements which he could not meet, and his credit was of no value at our local “Tattersal’s.” His mind, it was rumoured, unable to withstand the crash, had given way ; and it was even asserted that an order had been received for his immediate removal to a private asylum.

CHAPTER XV.

MONDAY after Whit-week is generally a loose day with the operative classes of South Lancashire. Neither the loom, nor the lathe, nor the anvil are so attractive as to induce in those whose business it is to attend to them a desire to thoroughly relinquish the pursuit of pastime. Somehow the bellows sound wheezy and asthmatical; the turning-tool requires more sharpening than usual, and the loom-gearing seems to work in a slatternly, reluctant manner, as if it required, at least, another day's rest.

In out-of-the-way villages like Irkdale the youth during daytime have recourse to marbles, or jumping, as being of a class of amusements that are the most familiarly associated with their ordinary work-a-day life, and, as a consequence, tending to drive

away any lingering remnants of holiday feeling. Those who have advanced beyond the first steps of love-making find other occupations more to their taste. These will probably be found disturbing washing arrangements, or interfering with the necessary vocations of the needle, by tricks played upon clothes-lines, or “peggy tubs,” and sly pilferings of thread and linen. These annoyances (if such they can be called) lead, as they are intended, to assignations and covert interviews at places so far removed from paternal surveillance as to necessitate half-an-hour or an hour’s walk down some quiet path—generally the most secluded and love-inviting.

“Joe-at-Clinker’s,” the smith’s apprentice, a youth whose beard had not yet aspired to to an acquaintanceship with the razor, had made successful overtures to a neighbour lass ; and few in Irkdale were prettier than “Mally-o’Jammie’s,”—daughter of the gardener at the “Grange.”

It happened this way :

Joe was in love before he quite knew it ; and courted with looks every time he chanced to meet Mally, until his ears began to be uncomfortably hot, and his face so tell-tale red, that, had he said nothing to the girl, she must have known what had caused all this confusion. It was a wonder “Clinker” had not discovered what was amiss with the youth long before he was told, for there were occasions in which the latter’s “striking” was very inexpert, as his master’s hand could testify ; but these would be when he happened to catch a glimpse of a certain headkerchief fluttering past the smithy window, or heard the merry ring of a voice that for the moment took a deal of the strength out of his sinews.

Notwithstanding all this shyness, Joe found himself at last compelled to say something. It was Monday after Whit-week ; Clinker was at the “Jolly Jumper,” whence nothing short of a conflagration could have driven him, consequently there was no one to attend to such jobs as might be brought to

the smithy,—if we except the apprentice, and he felt rather disposed to holiday-making himself.

“Mally-o’-Jammie’s,” who was a weaver, and wove upon a “jacquard” loom, had the misfortune to break one of the irons of her “lifter;” and as her father was down at the Grange, following his own work, she was placed under the necessity of going to the smithy herself to get the article repaired.

Joe was lounging upon the bench, hardly decided whether to lay the fire or strip his apron, when Mally presented herself at the smithy door, and timidly inquired if there was “nob’dy in.”

“Nawe,” Joe replied, as if ignoring his own presence, or forgetting that he was “*somebody*.” “What dost want?” he inquired, the old tell-tale flushing into his cheeks, and a desire to sink himself into nothing coming over him.

“Well,” replied the girl, producing the broken “lifter,” and blushing in turn,—“I broke this *hoyrn* as soon as I started o’ wayvin’

this morning, an' I want it piecin, for I donnō like th' thowts o' having to play a' day. Con *theaw* do it?"

Joe took hold of the broken "lifter," and after examining it a much longer time than either the nature of the fracture or the process of repairing it required, said—

"I con happen do it, Mally; at any rate, I'll try. Wilt—wilt (what was he going to say?)—wilt *blow* for me?"

"Eh, Joe, I conno' blow. Heaw could I?"

"It's yessier than treadin' a jacquard treddle, if theaw could *brake this*," replied the enamoured smith, gaining confidence as he spoke. "I'll just show thee heaw."

The process of laying the fire required but a very short period of time, and Joe set about it with the most commendable alacrity.

Directly a small Vesuvius was sending a shower of sparks all over the fireplace; the blaze roared in the chimney, and lent such a glow to Mally's face as she stood by, that her lover thought for the moment sunshine was a fool to it.

“ Neaw then,” said Joe, relinquishing his hold of the lever by which the bellows was worked, “ get howd o’ this hondle, an’ do as I did, an’ I’ll piece thy hoyrn afore theaw knows wheer theaw art.”

Whether it was the action of the bellows or the heat of the fire, or both combined, that had operated on Joe’s courage, it would be mere guessing to say; but the youth had grown so bold all at once, that he was within “two pins,” to use his own expression, of taking hold of Mally instead of the iron that was now fast approaching to a white heat.

The girl handled the lever like a “good un,” Joe thought, and so engaged was he in admiring the dimples in her arms as they went up and down with the motion of the bellows, and now and then catching a glance from a pair of eyes whose expression gave encouragement to further acquaintance, that it is no wonder he forgot both himself and the iron, and thought of nothing but Mally.

“ Winnot it do, Joe ? ” inquired the girl,

somewhat tired of her novel occupation, “ I’m sure it’s red enough.”

“ Do, behanged ! ” exclaimed the smith, getting more bold and desperate ; “ let it swither away like matchwood, an’ I’ll mak’ thee a new un. Heigh, owd wench ! I’ll have a buss neaw if th’ smithy tumbles,” and the next moment his arms were clasped round Mally’s waist with a tightness that could be compared to nothing so much as the grip of a vice.

Mally would have screamed, only it was daylight, and the arms were Joe’s, and he had promised to make her a new iron ; so she thought better of the proceeding, and so far yielded herself up to her lover’s embraces that the sparks had ceased to fly about the fireplace, and the blaze had let down its music to something like very faint sighing.

“ Joe, behave thyself,” was the only expression in the shape of remonstrance by which the smith’s amorous advances were met.

“ I will when I’m eawt o’ wynt,” said Joe, knocking his head about the lever in his

eagcrness to have more kisses than he had asked for. "I've bin longin' for a chance o' this sort mony a while, an' neaw it's *thee*, Mally, an' no surrender."

"Theaw wouldno ha' done so, Joe, if Clinker had been in."

"Nawe, I donno think I should. He'd ha' gan me a cleawt i'th' carhole if I'd aust. But neaw, Mally, if theaw'll ha' me, I'll ha' thee; an' we'n cooart six neets a week an' twice o' Sundays. What sesta?"

"Theawrt i' sich a hurry. Lemmi get my wynt. What would folk say if they see'd us?"

"Let 'em say what they'n a mind. They'n do that chus heaw 'tis."

"Well, but I wouldno' ha' nob'dy to talk abeawt me."

"Then say th' word an' ha' done wi' it."

"Lemmi goo, Joe; do neaw, if theaw pleases."

"Say th' word, an' then."

"Well, *th' word*; will that satisfy thee?"

“Stop a bit; wilt have a walk t’neet as far as th’ Woodlands?” and Joe relaxed, but not quite relinquished, his hold of Mally.

“Eh, heaw cont’ think it?” was the reply, but it was given in such a manner that Joe *could* “think it,” and feel certain, also, that the proposal was not very strongly objected to.

“Ther’ll be plenty moore lads an’ wenches gooin’ that road; so we shanno’ be by ussel,” said the latter, with determined perseverance in his manner.

“But my moather ’ll be cross if hoo gets t’ yer ut I’ve gone eawt wi’ thee,” said the girl, looking down. She meant to go all the time, of course.

“Never mind; if hoo sauces thee tell her I’m ready to tak’ thee off her honds any day; for I’se be eawt o’ my time in a week or two, an’ then th’ mesthur ’ll give up th’ smithy to me, an’ I’ll work like a steeam injun, an’ theaw’st have as fine a heawse an’ everythin’ else as anybody i’th’ Hollow; neaw then,” and Joe again tightened his hug, and took an-

other kiss—this time without the slightest resistance on Mally's part.

What girl could withstand such inducements as the smith held out, especially when the evenings were so lovely, and the hawthorn was in blossom, and the walks so pretty, as they were about the Woodlands ? Beside, Joe was a “ nice lad,” when his face was not begrimed with “ smithy smudge ; ” and he would be washed as clean as a “ new pin ; ” and he would wear the blue and gold neckerchief which she had so often admired ; and he would pass his arm tenderly round her, as they crept down by fragrant hedge-rows, and lingered about old queer styles. What a transport that would give ! It was not like being in a smithy with all that ugly iron about them.

“ Eh, Joe ; theaw'rt a reet un ! ”

“ Theaw'll goo, then, wilta ? ”

“ Ay, get my lifter pieced, an' lemme be gettin' to my loom,—an' then—,” yes, and *then*.

Puff went the bellows again ; up flew the

sparks ; merrily the blaze gambolled in the chimney, and merrily Joe set to work upon the lifter. The anvil rung as it had never rung before—not in Mally’s ears. And happy love-scenes, and pictures of bright hearths—made brighter by kind words and cheerful smiles—seemed to dwell in the flashes of light that at each stroke of the hammer pervaded every nook and cranny of that old dingy building.

How Joe could wield the hammer ! always making it fall to within a hair’s breadth of the proper place ; sometimes bringing it down with a force that seemed, in Mally’s eyes, to make the iron wince ; then gradually tempering down the blows until they sounded like the light tapping which love gives to a true heart ! There were none truer than thine, Mally !

The broken “lifter” was repaired at last ; a “spick-an’-span” new iron replacing the damaged one, and now nothing was required only the payment of the bill.

“ Heaw mich will it be ? ” asked the girl,

putting her hand into her pocket, and causing a jingle amongst half-pence, thimbles, "pin-poppets," and the like.

"What dost meean?"

"Heaw mich shall I ha' to pay?"

"Dunno ax me, Mally. I'm o'erpaid neaw, an' I meean to be furr i' thy debt afore lung. Tak' thy lifter, an' welcome;—obbut, I wish it 'ud brake agen as soon as theaw starts o' wayvin'."

"What for, Joe?"

"So as theaw could come an' *blow* for me agen."

"Get off wi' thee;—theawrt never satisfied," and Mally, after receiving a charge not to forget the assignation at the Woodlands, and giving a promise that she would not, turned and left the smithy.

Joe's eyes followed the girl down the lane with further longing.—"Clogs an' white stockin's," he said to himself; "an' sich little clogs, too, an stockin's ut lookin' as smoot an' as cleean as a new 'baccapipe afore it's bin hondlet by owd Dirty Thumbs. If I've owt

any moore to do wi' wark this day, it'll ha' to tumble o'th' top o' me ; so neaw for it ! ” and Joe stripped his apron in a twinkling, then flinging it up amongst the rafters, as if in triumph, commenced a series of such “ marlocks ” as he was never known to indulge in before. He whistled, sang, danced, placed his head on the anvil, and tried to send his heels in the direction the apron had gone, but, failing in the experiment, came down in an unexpected manner, which took a little of the steam out of him.

“ There, that’ll do,” he said ; “ my yed’s noane flat enough for a job o’ that sort ; so I mind no moore on’t. I wish it wur welly dark, an’ I’re peearchin’ on a rail up at th’ Woodlands,—swingin’ my clogs like two clock pendilums ut are waggin’ a match ; an’ Mally just creepin’ up to me wi’ a face as breet as a new polished cage knob. I could jump eawt o’ my skin like a cork eawt of a pop-bottle when th’ bant’s cut ; that I could.” And he sang whilst he shovelled the blackening ashes aside—

Ther' wur a coach stopt wi' its wheels turnin' reawnd,
Gooin' up Dukinfilt broo—comin' deawn ;
An' pigs ut had wings they wur frisky ;
A tinker wur drawin' an owd midge's tooth,
Becose it ud bitten his toppin', forsooth ;
An' hens ut gan milk they wur cakin' ;
An' donkies wur brewin' an bakin' ;
Then eh what a do upo' Dukinfilt broo—
When teetotallers get drunken wi' whisky.

Evening came at last, after seeming to put off its advent a long, long time, too long for lovers ; and it was just such an evening as painters love to introduce into a picture of rural courtship. The “gloaming” descended with an imperceptible creeping of its wingless shadow, and the blue of mid-heaven grew more intense as the golden fan which received the blush of sunset closed its folds over the sinking glory. The grass, just springing into manhood, was setting its coronal of liquid gems, as if emulous of the brightness which Hesperus was already flinging from his brow ; and the slow marshalling of the stars as they fell into the train of night, spread a softened splendour over the sky, like the presence of that chaste form of beauty which strikes not

the sense with wonder, but lingers a living rapture in the memory. Now a solitary thrush would "start into voice a moment," piping forth faint snatches of song that die into whispers at last, reminding us of that mysterious harmony our fancy hears when listening to childhood's slumber breathing.

But all was not peace, nor that which sounds of peace, in those pleasant meadows close by the "Woodlands." There was petty warfare being carried on amongst "canary buzzerts" * and "bit-bats," boys pursuing with stripped jackets and pinafores, roaring lustily over the chase. A faint hum, not unmixed with fits of shrill laughter, came up from the near village of Lower Crumpsall, and other sounds belonging to jocund life, awoke the echoes at intervals. There was a restless movement amongst the trees, in whose branches a colony of rooks had spread their mattresses ; perhaps occasioned by some late comers-in putting on their night-caps, or

* A kind of yellow moth that flies at evening.

others hopping from their paternal twigs to spend a night in wooing.

Ears were listening to these latter noises, as if seeking to beguile an anxious hour, when other and more welcome sounds were expected to make themselves audible. Joe-at-Clinker's was at the "trysting" spot, waiting for Mally-o'-Jammies to make her appearance. The workhouse clock had rung the appointed hour, and already several couples had passed the stile against which he leaned. Mally could not be long, surely; and Joe's heart turned on steam as the anxious moments came and went.

Presently a light pattering sound broke through the distance, and grew more distinct as it approached. There was no mistaking what the sound proceeded from, for just such a form as Joe thought could not be found anywhere out of "Irkdale" presented itself at the bend of the footpath, and in another minute the rooks might have heard, had they cared to listen, the salutes which were exchanged between the happy pair.

“ Eh, Mally ! ”

“ Eh, Joe ! ”

“ I’re gettin’ feeart theaw wurno’ for comin’, owd crayther,” said the latter, as he seized hold of his prize and administered a hug. “ Th’ warkhouse clock has stricken lung sin’.”

“ It struck just as I’re comin’ past, that’s a’,” said Mally, in defence,—if any defence were needed.

“ Well, but it looks an heawr sin’,” Joe declared, getting his face in tempting proximity to Mally’s. “ What nice *hair oil* theaw’s gettn. It smells like a whul garden full o’ pinks an’ wallfleawers. Wheere dost buy it at ? ”

“ At owd—” but before Mally could proceed further, her utterance was checked by a little diversion that Joe was performing inside her bonnet—“ at owd Dirty Thumbs,” she said, finishing the sentence with a gasp. “ Sink thee, Joe, be quiet ! ”

“ Whoa could be quiet wi’ sich a armful as this ? ” said Joe, seeming puzzled for the

moment as to what kind of a demonstration he should make next to show how sincere and heartfelt was his passion. "Eh, I do like thee, Mally!" This he said after a protracted gaze at the countenance that was, indeed, "as breet as a new-polished cage knob."

"Doesta, lad, gradely?" said the girl; and the rosiest tints of sunset seemed to be reproduced in her face as she looked up into the doting eyes of her lover.

"Ay, I do. I could ate thee just meet neaw like a hawpo' th o' sallet to a new mouffin buttercake; that I could."

"But theaw'd want me agen, Joe, would't no?"

"Want thee! I should want thee a theaw-sunt times o'er! Wilt ha' this bit o' hague-blossom? I geet it cawt o'th' hedge wheer I seed thee layin' th' clooas cawt th' tother day," and Joe produced a bunch of hawthorn-blossom of a delightful fragrance, and offered it to Mally.

"It's sweet," observed the girl, as she

sniffed the perfume of the blossom ; “ An’ it’s th’ fust gift ever theaw gan me.”

“ Nay,” exclaimed the youth, placing his hand upon his heart,—“ ther’s summat here ’ats bin thine mony a lung while ; an’ if ever I want it back, I’ll have it chopped into spoon-mayte.” This he said with a fervour that caused Mally’s bosom to heave in response ; and the two experienced a moment of rapture that was quite bewildering.

Voices were now heard in the immediate distance. One was a merry, laughing voice, but the other was scarcely audible ; and as Joe looked down the footpath to see whence the sound came, he felt no little displeasure at what he regarded as an intrusion.

The parties were now so near that the smith could easily distinguish the merry voice to be that of a woman, though it had somewhat of a masculine tone about it.

The lady walked a few paces in advance of her companion, and the two were now so near the stile that their conversation could be heard by the other couple.

“Say no more, Alfred,” entreated the lady, who was a “fast” looking person, “fair, fat,” but under “forty,” and who had an easy swagger in her gait that had evidently not been acquired in the drawing-room; “it is all nonsense, you know. Indeed, I don’t believe a word you say.”

“But, Miss Dashwood——.”

“It is not possible, little as I am able to judge,” interrupted the lady, “that you, who have been playing at Paul and Virginia with this girl,—this Miss what-d’ye-call-her—can be so deeply in love with another as you would have me believe.”

“Is there not, then, anything I could say that would induce you to have faith in my professions?”

“No; nor anything you could do. Say that you have a little friendly regard for me, and I’ll compound with you. I, who have never known what real love was, care not for a large estate of that kind of property. Bring me all you have to spare, and I’ll accept it as full payment. I can’t say more.”

“ You don’t believe, then, I can so soon forget Miss Wilson.”

“ I don’t.”

“ You feel confident.”

“ Poz.”

By this time the intruding party had passed the stile, without appearing to notice the two whose amours they had so unseasonably interrupted, and they were now getting out of hearing.

The smith raised his cap in astonishment at what he had seen and heard ; then turning to his sweetheart with a look of wonder, exclaimed—

“ By my gronmoather’s wheel-yed ! if you isno’ Alfred Herbert. Well, I’ll be consarned ! ”

“ Ay, an’ whoa’s that young woman ut’s with him ? ” asked Mally, with as much surprise in her manner as Joe had expressed.
“ It isno’ Adelaide Wilson, I’m sure.”

“ Nawe,—is it hecky as like ! ” said Joe.
“ Yon wench has moore bant abcawt her nor Adelaide Wilson. Well, ther’s no tellin’ whoa

cooarts whoa. If Adelaide gets to yer o' this it'll brake her heart in't a theawsunt pieces."

"Well, but, Joe,—dost raly think ut Alfred *is* cooartin' yon woman?"

"What does it favvur? He's tellin' her he likes her, as fast as race-runnin', an' I'm sure he's towd Adelaide th' same."

"Well, but *theaw* wouldno do so, would ta, Joe?"

"Nawe; I'd ate my yed, an' have it powd o' purpose, th' fust," and Joe actually looked as if he was about to attempt such an impossible feat in gastronomy.

"Eh, come, Joe,—let's be gooin' toart whoam, afore we sec'n summut wurr," entreated Mally, a sense of alarm creeping over her. "Yon's made me feel gradely unyessy."

"Theaw's no 'casion t' feel unyessy, Mally," said Joc, again passing his arm round the girl's waist. I'm noane a *gentleman* an' theaw'rt noane a *lady*, so we con afford to stick to one another like a tak-up to a dur-flag. I'm just thinkin' ut if Dick Robinson

wurt' meet yon two, it ud be wurr nor a dog-battle in abeawt a hawve a minnit ; for Dick thinks moore o' Adelaide nor if hoo're a queen. Well, come, dunno tremble. We are no' a' bad uns ; if we wur, it ud be a queer world ; so cock up thy jib, an' let's have another smeawtch, an' then I'se goo whoam an' feel as fain as a lad wi' a new suit o' clooas an' a buttercake."

Joe obtained the coveted kiss, along with a look of confiding love, and the two, pondering no doubt on what they had seen and heard, took their way homewards ; and so delighted were they with each other at parting (to meet again the following night), that Joe declared to Mally "ut if it wurno' for havin' t' set to wark i'th' mornin', he'd get upo' th' heawse, an' peearch upo' th' slates o'er wheer hoo slept, so ut he shouldno' be so far off her."

CHAPTER XVI.

AN inquest was held at the “Jolly Jumper,” on the body of a living man ; if he could be said to be living who only ate and drank and slept,—who, in other respects, was as dead to the world as if he was already enclosed in his coffin. That man was Charles Herbert. Jacob Robinson officiated as coroner over the inquiry ; Clinker was foreman, and Swinkey, Robin th’ milkman, and three or four other frequenters of the house, composed the jury. King Saul was not present, having been sent for to the Grange ; for what purpose nobody could surmise. Pothook, as may be supposed, was absent ; the resuscitation of his tripe and trotter business requiring his presence elsewhere, but the kitchen, nevertheless, retained much of its former character and appearance.

It was Saturday evening of the week following Whitsuntide, and as a consequence of the pastime, funds were low with a majority of the company. Besides, times were not so good in Irkdale at this period as they were ten years before, and the change had told upon the business of the “Jumper.” Old Johnny’s till did not ring as it was wont to do, and gills had taken the place of pints in many instances.

As stated in a previous chapter, it was rumoured that Mr Herbert had been removed to a private lunatic asylum. This, however, was not the case. There was nothing so violent or dangerous in his madness as to necessitate his removal from home. It took more of the quiet and absent form of mental derangement, like the imbecility of age. He did not appear to remember anything connected with the immediate cause of his misfortune. Whit-week was as thoroughly a blank to him as if it had been unlived. But the more remote associations haunted his memory, and he would converse with imagin-

ary people, and brood over scenes that appeared to have strange revelations connected with them. It had been the opinion of some that he was merely suffering from an attack of *delirium tremens*, and that a few days' quiet would restore him to his proper person ; but as one day succeeded another, and brought no change in his demeanour, suspicions of a settled mental aberration became stronger. His creditors forbore to press their claims whilst there was the slightest hope of returning reason, a circumstance that would have afforded example to people belonging to more legitimate professions. These, however, could not be held back altogether ; the crash must reverberate,—then, farewell the Grange—the “pomp and circumstance” of voluptuous life ;—farewell visions of splendour, the golden dream that scattered luxury in every path till heaven was forgotten by the dreamer !

The worst suspicions had been confirmed when our little party assembled at the Jolly Jumper, so that the “jury” had little to do

but agree upon a verdict. Jacob Robinson hereupon rose to sum up.

“ Chaps,” said the “ coroner,” “ it just lies here: Mesthur Herbert’s takken completely eawt o’ eawr honds. We’n no mooar to do with him nor if he’re farmin’ his little bit o’ greawnd i’t’ church-yard yondher. If he’s done owt wrung to us, we mun forgive him; for he’s nobbut like a chilt in its dadins,* cryin’ for things it knows nowt abeawt, an’ uts no moore knowledge o’ what’s gooin on reawnd it, nor if it wur shut up in a cubbert or asleep in it kayther. Someb’dy sed ‘Sarve him reet.’ Well, that’s a hard thing for t’ say. As I towd yo’ before, he’s takken eawt o’ eawr honds. God o’ Meety’s tryin’ him his own way, an’ he’ll ha’ witnesses ut’ll tell th’ truth, yo’ may depend on’t; an’ he’ll weigh him up like George at Royles did, full bobbins an’ empties, an’ if he finds him short o’ weight, it’s nowt to us. Neaw, I shouldno like nob’dy to look upo’ this as any sort of a joke. It’s a sayrious thing, losin’

* *Dadins*; leading-strings.

their wits. It's like decin an' takkin their wynt at th' same; an' if I mut say what th' verdict, as yo're pleeast to co it, owt t' be, I should give it in 'Deead alive, an' buried wick.' Neaw then, we'n done with him. His akeawnt i' heaven's shop-book is closed. It's crossed off at th' bottom, an' whether God o' Meety 'll make him a bankrupt or not will noather consarn th' Lord Chancellor nor never a judge ut sits under a wig. If he's done any on us an injury, as I sed before, we mun forgive him. I're towd ut if he'd won i'sted o' havin' lost, he'd ha' bowt a' Irkdale, an' made my heawse int' a dog-kennel. That 'ud ha' bin wrung, I feel, for I've livt yonder gooin' o' forty yer, an' owe noather londlort nor nob'dy else a penny. I've paid for th' heawse abeawt five times o'er, an' I think I owt to tarry in it till I'm ready to flit into th' churchyort. But as I're saying, it wurno fort' be: one hoss just putten it yed before another has changed everythin', an' we owt to think no mooar abeawt it. It's bin God's will, and I believe He knows what's th' best."

From the looks of the company, as Jacob resumed his seat, it was evident that a majority concurred in his observations, and were prepared to return a “verdict” accordingly. Robin, th’ milkman, who was a clod of a fellow, however, dissented from the general tenour of the sentiments put forth. He could not see why the bankrupt ought not to be morally as well as legally responsible. The man owed him something like a pound for milk and butter, and he should take the first opportunity of lodging his claim for the amount. Jacob Robinson was a sentimental old fool according to the farmer’s notion; but sentiment would not grow grass and corn, nor supply fodder for the shippion; therefore Robin would have none of it.

“Robin,” said Jacob, again rising, and casting a lowering glance at his neighbour, “thy feyther once borrowed ten peawnd off me on a stamped note. It wur owin’ when he dee’d, though I believe he could ha’ paid me. Neaw, I could ha’ fotcht th’ vally on’t eawt o’th’ shippion or th’ stable if I’d had a

mind; but I sed—Nawe, I winno rob his childer. Deead folk owe no debts, I thowt; so I forgan him, an' brunt th' note. Thy milk-score's nobbut a peawnd, theaw ses: theaw'rt dooin' weel: be marciful, an' say nowt abeawt it; an' if theaw feels any wurr off i' thy mind, I'll mak' thee a pair o' wheelbarrows for nowt; neaw then!"

Though Robin felt piqued at this unexpected disclosure the joiner had made respecting his deceased father's debts, he said nothing in reference to it, but drank more frequently and smoked more determinedly,—an effect of the rebuke which his companions heartily enjoyed.

It was agreed at last, with this single dissentient, that a charitable view of Mr Herbert's affairs would be the most proper and satisfactory to all parties present, and that the least said about them would best accord with the character and disposition of the good people of Irkdale. The man had lost every earthly possession; and more, he had been deprived of that without which life was not

worth having, the link which connects this world with the next—his reason. Let him rest !

“ What are Mesther Herbert’s liabilities, dun yo’ know, Jacob ? ” inquired Clinker, who, although he was regarded as foreman of the “ jury,” had hitherto said but little.

“ Well, I’ve yerd different tales,” the joiner replied ; “ some sen fifty theawsunt ; I’ve yerd eighty ; an ther are folk ut sen they would no’ clear him for a hundert. But, heawever, one thing is sartin, a’s gone, and moore beside it. Ther winno be a rag nor a stick left when a’s sattlet up.”

“ I’ve yerd some queer tales abeawt that lad of his,” observed the smith, with a degree of hesitancy in his manner. “ They sen it isno a’ square with him.”

The joiner’s countenance fell on hearing this communication, and he hitched his chair closer to the table, and looked very inquiringly at his friend.

“ What is ther up theere, Clinker ? ” he

said in a half whisper; “ has the young cock bin crowin’ like th’ owd un ?”

“ Well,” said Clinker ; and he rung his pipe on the fender, as if intended to increase the significance of what he was about to impart : “ They sen he’s bin cooartin a young lady fro tooart Karsey Moor, as rich as a hoo Jew, an’ a very fine womman for t’ look at, too, for owt I know.”

“ An’ what by that ?” interposed Robin, th’ milkman.

“ Wait a bit, an’ I’ll tell thee,” replied the smith, not at all pleased with the interruption. “ He’s bin borrowin’ brass off her upo’ the strength o’ weddin ; an’ spendin’ it same as if it wur wo’th nowt.

“ What,” said the landlord, with a look of astonishment, “ I thowt ther wurno a nicer, steadier, dacenter lad i’ a’t’ country nor *him*. Clinker, theawrt mista’en, mon.”

“ Well, yon Joe o’ eawrs goes rootin’ abeawt i’ queer places, an’ amung strange folk, when he goes o’ shoooin’ for Owd Jenks, th’ hoss doctor ; an’ he gets to know things ut are no’

put i'th' newspaper every day, that he does ;" and the smith again rapped the fender with his pipe.

" I could tell yo' to a figure," Clinker resumed, " heaw mich young Herbert's borrowed i'th' last month o' this womman, neaw then ! an' he hasno' spent it i'buyin' hymn-books, that's another thing. Neaw would yo believe ut he's had abeawt fifty peawnd i'th' month, an' squandert it—God knows heaw ? "

" Nawe, I shouldno' ; heaw theaw taks my wynt, Clinker !" and Johnny dropped upon a chair as suddenly as if he'd been knocked down. " He co'ed here," he said, " no lunger sin nor th' last week, an' axt me if I could let him ha' five peawnd for th' month. He sed his feyther did nor alleaw him sixpence ; but he should ha' some brass comin' to him in a week or two. He sed he wanted to buy th' pawn-ticket belonging to a ring ut wur wo'th a great deegal mooar nor five peawnd, an' he're gooin' t' mak a present on it to a young womman. Th' lad towd sich a straight forrud tale abeawt it, ut I leet him ha'

th' brass at oncest beawt thinkin' owt anymoor
abeawt it."

"That's a bad score, Johnny," said the milkman, grinning. "Yo' may get th' dish-cleawt to it, same as yo' did thoose sixteen pints ut Pothook set on when he said he're gooин a makkin his fortin i'th' teawn."

"Well, I shanno ax *thee* t' pay it," said the landlord, hastily. "Theaw generally man-
ages t' *drink* a' theaw *pays* for, an' happen a
sope mooar, sometimes; so theaw may howd
thy husht. I should ha' towd yo'," he con-
tinued, turning to the others, "ut eawr parson
co'ed th' day after, he does co sometimes o'
gettin' a warm gill wi' a bit o' nutmeg grat-
tert in it, an' a bit o' lemon, and I axt him a
question or two abeawt this lad, an' fro' what
he towd me, I du'st ha' trusted him wi' fifty
peawnd i'sted o' five. He sed ther' wurno' a
nicer, quieter, civiller, bether-mindut lad with-
in th' seawnd o' eawr bells; noa th' skoo bell,
for that's crackt, same as thce, Robin, an'
crackt folk are no' th' readiest at given owt,"

and Johnny threw a sarcastic look at the milkman.

Jacob Robinson had been silent for some time, looking steadfastly at the fire, and scarcely listening to the conversation. He started up at length, however, and hitched his chair still closer to the smith. His thoughts had been reverting to Clinker's statement respecting Alfred Herbert's amatory affairs, and in a manner that betokened deep concern, inquired if his friend knew anything more of such matters.

“ What family does this young womman belong to, Clinker, ut theawe's bin tellin' abeawt? ” he said, “ I could liket' yer a bit moore abeawt her.”

“ Well, I dunno exactly know,” replied the smith; “ they sen her feyther made a fortin wi' hoss-racin', an' ut hoo's a bit gan to gamblin' hersel. Hoo wur deawn at th' Grange o' hoss-back a day or two sin', eawr Joe wur sayin', an' a bonny beawnceer hoo is. As fat as a Chinee pig, an' dashes o'er wick thurn an' wayther same as a hunter. An'

I've yerd moore nor that ; they sen hoo's Mesther Herbert's biggest creditor, an' hoo's made it so ut nob'dy con touch th' Grange nobbut hersel', so ut if it comes to a weddin' between her an' th' young un, hoo'll ha' nowt t' do but hang her bonnet up, an' stable her hoss, an' they'n goo on agen same as nowt had happent."

" Well, I'm fain theaw's towd me this, Clinker," said Jacob ; " I're feeart ther summit between him an' yon wench ut eawr heawse ; but neaw I feel a bit yessier abeawt it. I did no' want t' part wi' her at a' ; that theaw knows, Clinker. I geet a letter fro' her feyther, o' Wednesday, an' he ses in it at I munno be su'prist if he pops int' th' Jumper some Sethurday neet, same as he did afore, but in a different plight."

" He's in Ameriky, is nor he ? " inquired the other.

" It's just here," replied Jacob, " he didno' want nob'dy t' know beside me wheere he wur ; but between us two he's noane in Ameriky. He's somewheere else, an' makkin'

brass as fast as he con keawnt it, for owt I know, an' when he comes back he's for buyin' eawr Nanny a new bed-geawn, an' we mun ha' th' biggest stew some Sunday morning ut con be bowt i' Manchester; ther'll be some starleet then, owd lad."

"Talk abeawt yo're Nanny," said the smith, casting a glance toward the door, "here hoo is, by th'mon!"

"Ay, by owd Sam an' his wife!" exclaimed Jacob, twisting round his chair as he spoke. "What's up neaw, I wondher? Nanny, wench, what art theaw after? I could ha' fund th' road whoam beawt thee comin' for me."

"Sink thee, lad, I'm noane comn for thee, —nowt o'th' sort," returned a "cant" old woman, who with a chocolate silk handkerchief tied over a white, full-screened cap, had crept as quietly as a ghost to the kitchen door. "I never did come a fotchin' thee whoam yet, an' I shanno begin neaw, chus heaw theaw stops eawt."

"Well, what's browt thee here, then?"

demanded the individual who claimed to be the woman's lord and master,—our old friend Jacob Robinson.

“ My legs, what else ?” replied the dame, coming forward and laying her hand upon her husband's shoulder. “ It's noane that gate but I con come beawt bein' carried.”

“ Nawe, but theaw's summit up, I con see. What is it ?”

“ Wait till I've gotten my wynt,” said the other, with some haste. “ Theawrt i' sich a hurry ; an' theaw wouldno ax me t' sit me down if I're fairly droppin'. Oh dear me !” she exclaimed, seating herself in a rather odd manner upon the nearest chair,—“ sich a woald as this !”

“ Come, neaw—what is it ?”

“ Well, theaw'rt wanted awhoam. I dunno want thee, sink thee ; theaw met ha' tarried a' neet, for me ; but yon's a young felly comm, an come into th' heawse he would, whether I'd let him or not. He wanted to see thee, he said, an' have a word with thee. I've had t' leeave him wi' cawr Addy : sich a thing as I

never yerd tell on before. The *iday* (idea), Jacob, o' young fellies an' wimmin talkin' to one another by *thersels*. It's eawtragious ; is nor it ? ”

“ By th' mass, neaw—that seawnds meetily like cooartin' ” said Jacob ; his desire to be facetious prevailing over his alarm. “ Theaw's forgotten *thy* cooartin' days, when theaw ust' creep to th' eend o' th' heawse, after yerrin' my whistle ; an' heaw sometimes thy feyther 'ud ha' comn eawt wi' a brier rod in his hont, an' say he'd mark me across th' back with it till I're scored like a pie-crust if I didno be off. But whoa is this young felly ? ”

“ Eh, dunno ax me that,” entreated the dame, shaking her head, as if to imply a negative answer. “ He's a nice young felly, an' weel donned ; an' talks as fine as a gentleman. He's somebody, theaw may be sure.”

“ Heaw wur it theaw didno' scaud him ; wur th' kettle noane wot ? ”

“ Well, he lookt i' sich a takkin ; so I

thowt I'd come an' fotch thee ; for I could no moor stir him nor if he'd bin cheeant fast to th' oon dur."

" Theaw tells a queer tale, Nanny ; I'se belike t' goo an' see if I con shift him wi' my foot ;" and Jacob placed his hands upon his knees, and sprang up like a man of fewer years, who had made up his mind to fight.

" Clinker," he said, turning to the smith, " ther's summut to do moore nor a duck peearching, I'll uphowd thee. It strikes me it's that young prowt fro th' Grange ; an' if it is, I'll know what he meeans afore he strides o'er eawr dur stone agen ; mind if I dunno. Come, Nanny, let's treddle deawn th' bruck, an' see what a' this peewetin' meeans. Wheere's eawr Dick ? "

" Theaw knows he set off to Manchester this afternoon," Nanny replied ; " an' he's noane comm back yet. I'm feeart that lad's begun a stoppin' eawt moore nor he should do. I wondher whatever's comm o'er him."

" I'll brake his back if he doesno' mind. He's gettin' as sulky an' as dokin as an' owd

tum cat. I think he's abeawt cuttin' some moore teeth, an's a bit plagut for t' get 'em through. I'll lance 'em wi' my fist if he doesno' mind what he's abeawt; that I will. Come on, Nan." Thus sketching forth a course of corporeal admonition with which to check the wayward inclination of his son, Jacob bade his companions "good neet," and accompanied by his spouse, took an early departure from the "Jolly Jumper."

CHAPTER XVII.

IN order to gather the incidents of the story, it will be necessary to retrace our steps for a short distance, and return to the circumstances which induced Nanny Robinson to visit the “Jolly Jumper.”

We find the good dame engaged with her Saturday’s baking, an institution so thoroughly linked with the tastes and conservatism of Lancashire people as to be looked upon by them with a species of religious regard. Woe to our country, think many, when public bakehouses shall supersede private ovens, when there shall no longer be any necessity for that peculiarly-bright fire which seems to have a partiality for one side of the grate, and makes the polished fenderplate a mirror of cheerful *santoccini*! Nanny would as soon have thought of

sending her “tins” to the crater of Vesuvius as submitting them to the hands of a public baker; and, as for using “papper berm,” as she contemptuously termed German yeast, that was as far beyond her inclination as the giving up of baking altogether. Nanny on one side of the hearth, and the cat on the other, with a row of “rising” loaves betwixt them, was a picture of domestic comfort that the inexperienced in Lancashire life would be apt to speak of lightly. Then the dough-mug, with its cover of white cloth, and the rolling board, that when it was not in use, hung as an ornament in the nook,—these were accessories that ought not to be left out of the picture.

Our “gude wife” was in the act of sounding a crisp-looking loaf which she had just taken out of the oven, when Adelaide Wilson, who had been doing some light shopping, in a hurried manner entered the house. The dame was startled by this sudden interruption of her evening’s work, and was inclined to indulge in a little mild

scolding, when the unusual expression that dwelt on the girl's countenance caught her attention.

"Whatever's t' do wi' thee, wench?" was Nanny's exclamation, as she levelled her spectacles at the troubled face.

"Granny, you won't think worse of me, will you?" said Adelaide, the blush upon her cheek giving way to a sudden palleness, as she encountered her foster-parent's glance.

"Think wurr on thee, what for?"

"I couldn't help it; he would follow me," and the lass gave a hasty look in the direction of the window.

"Theaw's not a *chap* wi' thee, hasta?"

The other was silent, and the blush came to her cheeks again.

"Yi, theaw has; I see him yonder, rot him!" Nanny continued, going towards the door. "Addy, I did no' think theaw'd had owt o'th' sort, an' I'm loathe to think it neaw. Whoa is he?"

"I don't wish to deceive you, granny,"

said Adelaide. “ He’s a young gentleman that I’ve—met before—a time or two—and he will make me—stop with him when I meet him. He says he *must* come in and speak to you.”

“ Adelaide, theaw shouldno’ ha’ *gentlemen* following thee. Ift’ will have a chap, an’ it’s soon enoogh yet, let it be a dacent poor body like one’s sel, an’ noane o’ yor grand folk. Sometimes ther’s no good comes o’ sich like ;” and the dame shook her head and paused at the “ spear.”

“ He’s poor enough at present, God knows,” said Adelaide, in a compassionate tone, “ and he’s in great trouble about his father.”

“ His feyther ; whoa is his feyther ? ”

“ Mr Herbert at the Grange.”

“ Lord bless us ! Addy, no belike it’s him ! Theaw’s set me a’ ov a tremble.”

There came a knock at the door just as Nanny was giving vent to her astonishment. The latch was lifted, and, with a wild, sad look, and disordered exterior that was indica-

tive of his having slept several nights in his clothes, Alfred Herbert presented himself at the "spear."

"I beg your pardon, Mrs Robinson," said the youth, in a tone expressive of the greatest humility, "but I've been wanting to see you for some time, and hadn't the courage to visit your house. May I take a seat?"

"If yo' pleeosn," said the dame, surveying the visitor from head to foot. "Yo' seen I'm bakin', an' I munno' let my bread spoyle. What dun yo' want?"

Adelaide had by this time retired upstairs, and the two were left conveniently to themselves.

"You must have heard," replied Alfred, seating himself upon the nearest chair, and looking pensively at the floor, "that there has been a sort of attachment betwixt Miss Wilson and myself."

"I'd never yerd on't till just neaw," Nanny replied, "an it wur too soon then."

"It began in school friendship," continued the young man, "and grew to such

intimacy as led to a nearer relationship. I may have acted indiscreetly, but my intentions towards Adelaide were honourable, however my conduct may have led to opposite conclusions."

He was talking "Greek — downright Greek", to the old woman then, as might be gathered from the vacant look which she directed towards him.

"I may be ashamed to confess it, but the time has come when nothing can be concealed. I have had another engagement on my hands whilst I have been keeping company with Miss Wilson; but it was an engagement forced upon me by circumstances, and I have lived in hopes that I might be enabled to extricate myself from it. The last hope, however, is gone. I have no alternative left but to marry the other lady, and thereby save myself and our family from still greater ruin than that which has overtaken us."

Mrs Robinson gathered from the visitor's manner, if not from his language, that he had been dealing double in his amatory affairs,

and that it was desirable, for convenience' sake, his attachment to her foster-child should be broken off.

“ Yo’ dunno mean t’ say yo’n bin cooartin’ two at a time, dun yo’ ? ” she exclaimed, at the same time throwing open the oven-door, and letting out a cloud of fragrant steam.

“ I do mean to admit, to my shame, that I have that sin upon my soul, and am prepared to atone for it in the only way left open to me.”

“ Well, I never yerd nowt like it ! An’ dun gentlefolk aulus cooart two at onceet ? ”

“ I should hope it is the exception, and that in this case there is yet a way of making some amends for the wrong committed. Where is your good man, Mr Robinson ? I should like to see him before I go.”

“ He’s wheere he aulus is on a Setturday neet : i’ owd Johnny Smithie’s nook. If yo’ wanten him, I’ll fotch him as soon as I’ve taen thoose two loaves eawt o’ th’ oon. But yo’ munno lippen on him bein’ so quiet when he yers what yo’re comn abeawt.”

“I must take the consequences, whatever they may be. I have gone foully wrong, and must try to get upon the right path before it is too late.”

“An’ what ses Adelaide abeawt it?”

“Poor girl! I am afraid it will be a sad blow to her. Yet she took it so calmly when I broke the matter to her, that, with a little fretting, she may get over it.”

He had falsely estimated the girl’s feelings, had Alfred Herbert. She was sobbing then as if her heart would break, although he knew it not. That he had no strong attachment to her was confessed in the easy, and, I may say, cold manner in which he spoke of their separation; and he probably measured the depth of Adelaide’s affection by comparison with his own. He had no knowledge of the strength of her susceptibilities, as the opportunities for testing them had been few. Now he had subjected them to an ordeal that would bring out the pure gold her heart contained, and which would contrast brightly with the worldly

dross that he had suffered to accumulate in his own breast.

Mrs Robinson now took her last loaves out of the oven, and calling upstairs to her foster-daughter, said she was going out for a short time on an errand, whereupon Adelaide left her chamber, and descended to the house-place. Alfred Herbert could not help being struck with the altered appearance of his discarded mistress, if the term *discarded* may be appropriately used. Her eyes were red with weeping; her face was flushed, and her whole mien was such as to betoken the passing of a severe inward struggle. She tied on the old woman's head-napkin with her accustomed regard to neatness, notwithstanding that her hand trembled, and her bosom heaved, and the tears were not yet dry upon her cheeks. This done, she threw her arms round her guardian's neck and wept afresh; an emotion in which the old dame joined, and the two stood for some moments a spectacle for the callous of heart to moralize upon.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ALFRED HERBERT was of too generous and sympathetic a disposition in the main to have been an indifferent spectator of the scene before him ; and had not ruin been staring him in the face, it is more than probable he might have revoked the decision which circumstances had apparently forced upon him. If he did not regard Adelaide with that deep affection which admits of no second course, she certainly occupied the highest place in his esteem ; and now that tears had enhanced her beauty, giving a ray of holiness to charms which he had not beheld only in their happiest light, he felt such reproaches of his conduct as made his conscience wince under the ordeal. But necessity is inexorable, and fate was hurrying him on to purposes over which he had no control. By simply sacrificing present feelings

and desires, he had the means of raising himself from a state of indigence and peril to one of affluence and ease ; and where was the young man, situated like himself, who would forego such an opportunity for the sake of a little sentimental pastime ? This thing is done, he reasoned, every day. Lovers disagree, part,—a few tears on one side and regrets on the other ; and affections, or at least likings, become transferred with the ease of a commercial transaction. “ Love in a cottage ” was all very well ; but he had neither cottage nor the means of furnishing one, even if that was the only consideration. He was on the edge of a precipice ; one more step forward, and down he would go to hopeless ruin. Why then hesitate ? His name was yet fair in Irkdale, for aught he knew ; and even if it had suffered, he had the power of redemption in his own hands. Backward he must look for salvation, and his first love must be sacrificed.

“ Miss Wilson,”—no longer “ Adelaide.” The change fell upon the poor girl’s heart like ice. “ Miss Wilson,” said Alfred, not without

tenderness, “you will forgive me, I am sure. If this could have been avoided, God knows it would. I have no choice—none whatever.”

Mrs Robinson had departed on her errand, and Adelaide now stood looking through the window, from which the last gleam of sunset was just retiring. Her own sun was going down ere the meridian had been attained; and the night of her love, where no hope lingered, was shrouding around her.

“I have said already I forgive you,” she replied, after a painful pause; “and if you would have me still respect you, leave me at once.”

“But I would have you love me still, as I shall ever love you,” said Alfred, in a moment of indiscretion, and probably meaning less than the words implied.

“That can never be, Alfred Herbert,” Adelaide exclaimed, a proud and indignant spirit suddenly overcoming her gentle nature. “If I forgive you, there must be no condition but one.”

“And what must that be?”

“That we regard each other only as strangers.”

“I can never submit to such a condition, Adelaide,—anything but that. If you refuse to love me, you cannot prevent my still regarding you as one towards whom my heart can never change, whatever attachment I may be supposed to entertain towards others.”

“If you are capable of assuming a regard you do not feel, how do I know that you ever really loved me?” asked Adelaide, with the slightest bitterness in her manner.

“When first I became acquainted with you,” Alfred replied, “I knew little of the world beside; and had I remained ignorant of everything but you, I should now have felt less cause for regret. You know not the troubles that beset me, Adelaide; if you did you would pity rather than reproach me.”

“I do pity you, Alfred; I can do that at least. Your father’s misfortunes will fall upon you to some extent, and they alone entitle you to sympathy.”

“But there are misfortunes of my own

that you know nothing of, Adelaide; and which if I were to name, my conduct towards you would not be so unaccountable as it otherwise must appear."

"I only wish to know you as I have known you hitherto," said the girl, mournfully. "I have said I forgive you. Let that be sufficient. You will forget sooner than I."

"But it is necessary to say one word in exculpation of my conduct;" and the young man rose, and seizing the girl's hand as if to take leave, said—"Adelaide, two years ago I was as innocent as you are. I had not then learnt to dissemble. I knew not what dissimulation meant. I was as happy, too, as any boy in Irkdale; devoted to my studies, and hopeful of some time occupying an honourable position in society. My hopes soon failed on my entrance upon what we are pleased to call the world. My father's profession clung to me like a curse. I could not be admitted into certain classes of society. The moderately respectable, I thought, regarded me with distrust, if they did not shun me altogether.

They seemed to say, ‘gambler’s son,’ as they passed me, and I felt the reproach hourly stinging my soul. My father placed me in his own office. What had I before me there but to follow in his steps? I became disgusted with my duties in a short time; and he then, seeing my aversion to the business, obtained for me a situation in a mercantile concern, where I should have the benefit of wider and more creditable experience. Here I became associated with a number of fast young men, who attended music saloons, oyster rooms, midnight routs, and gay assemblies. *I had example at home* of this kind of life, and from that circumstance entered upon it with fewer qualms than I otherwise might have felt. This was an expensive career. Money seemed to melt at my touch. I became involved at last, made a false step, went deeper and deeper into difficulties, till, finding myself so beset, I became seriously alarmed for the safety of my reputation.

“One night, my father had a party of friends at home, a Miss Dashwood being

among them ; a person as much devoted to gaming as himself. Miss Dashwood was reputed immensely wealthy. We were partners in a dance, during which, strange as it may appear, she confessed a regard for me, and offered her whole fortune to my keeping. This my father was not ignorant of ; in fact, to bring us together was the principal motive that led him to give the entertainment ; and I, flattered by the lady's partiality, allowed my vanity to overcome my self-respect. The consequence was, that, whilst unmanned I submitted. The syren compromised all that was truthful and honourable in my relations with you, and opened the only way to save me from crime.

“ I have now explained to you everything ; and if, after hearing the confession, you could desire to attach yourself to a wretch like me, you are indeed forgiving.”

“ I pity you, Alfred, indeed I do,” said Adelaide, making an effort to release her hand. “ Had you told me this before”—

“ What then, Adelaide ?”

“ I might perhaps have saved you.”

“ *You* have saved me ! Impossible !

“ There is nothing impossible with God. I would have prayed for you night and day, and surely He would have helped you. It is now too late.”

“ It is too late, Adelaide ; and I feel that I have only one duty towards you, that of ridding you of a presence which can only prejudice your good name. But before we part, accept this ring as a remembrance of a happier time. It was the gift of my stepmother, and is only suited to the hand of innocence.”

With that the young man took a small diamond ring from his purse, and presented it to Adelaide, who, strange to say, allowed him unresistingly to place it on her finger.

“ It may be some acknowledgment of my love, and atonement for the wrong I have committed. It is all the restitution I can make except restoring to you that liberty which will be necessary for your future happiness. Farewell ! and may God bless you !”

But the girl had lost all consciousness, and fainted. Her lips had lost their colour, and an ashy paleness was spreading over her face. It was a crisis, the young man felt, and what to do under the circumstances he knew not.

At this moment footsteps were heard on the threshold. Now, the door flew open, and the next moment Dick Robinson entered the room.

Startling apprehensions came over Dick, as he stood observing the silent pair.

“I am afraid you will *mis*-interpret this situation,” stammered Alfred, as soon as fear would allow him utterance.

“*Miss* what?” growled Dick between his teeth, as he crouched cat-like before his adversary. “I shanno *miss* thee if I mak a spring. If theaw hasno’ thy prayers sed i’ two minits, I’ll send thee to Banter’s o’ Boby’s in a wel-wynt. So deawn o’ thy knees while thy limbs are whul.”

“But, Mr Richard”—

“Dunno Mesthur me; but get thy cooat off afore I mak it int’ mop-rags.”

“ You’ll surely allow me to explain ”—

“ I’ll alleaw thee t’ knock my yed off if theaw con. I’ve had enoogh explaint to-day. I want to yer no mooar.”

“ What have you heard ? ”

“ Yerd ? Why enoof t’ crack my ears. I towd thee what I’d do for thee if I catcht thee i’ any sort o’ hanky-panky wark,—an’ I’m gooin’ to do it i’ two minits. Theaw’s bin *wayvin upo’ two looms at onct*, an if that’s reet up an’ deawn straight, I’ve lost my plim-bob (plumb-rule).”

“ I confess it, my friend, and have come hear to make atonement for the wrong.” This Alfred said in a tone that was intended as an appeal to the better nature of his antagonist ; but Dick was imperturbable, and his knuckles did not relax the least, nor did the grin with which his teeth were set alter one jot of its savage expression.

It was useless, then, either to reason with or appeal to such a nature, thus warped by a desire to avenge what Dick considered the fallen honour of his foster-sister. The bland-

est smiles and the most honied words of young Herbert, all the dissimulation of which he was master, would prove ineffectual, and Alfred made up his mind at once to meet the worst. Placing Adelaide in old Jacob's arm-chair, he put himself in an attitude of self-defence, and bade his adversary take as much out of him as he possibly could.

Dick made a rush towards Adelaide, to assure himself that she was breathing, preparatory to "going into action," a movement which young Herbert mistook for an intended assault upon his own person; for no sooner had the former made his advance than the latter met him with a left-handed blow upon the face.

He was strong and active, was Alfred, and had made himself tolerably proficient in the art of self-defence. He had the advantage, too, of having given the first blow—drawn the "first blood," indeed, for a stream of it had begun to trickle down each side of Dick's mouth. But he knew not his man yet.

Dick was "hard as nails," and with

strength unwasted by dissipation, though wanting in “science,” had not forgotten what early practice in the school close had taught. With a swing of his right arm, like the motion of a sledge-hammer, he sent his antagonist flying head over heels into the nook.

“Theere, neaw,” said the victor, “I’ve paid thee what I owed thee, an’ a bit moore i’ th’ bargain; an’ if that isnor enoough, theaw con ha’ moore o’ th’ same sort, chep.”

Adelaide sprang to her feet, exclaiming, “How is this? Dick, Dick, what are you doing?”

“Fettlin’ that mon’s meawth a bit,” replied Dick, eager to resume the encounter now his blood was up; “an’ if he doesno’ come up to ‘time,’ I’ll lift him eawt o’t he dur wi’ my fooot, smartly.”

“Oh, Dick!—you shouldn’t have done that,—you might have killed him.”

“Wheay, look what he’s done at me,” and Dick, turning his face to the fire, exhibited to the alarmed girl a very eccentric moustache,

which under less serious circumstances would have been a most ludicrous sight. “ But this is nowt, Addy, to what he’s done toart thee, if—”

“ Me ! ” exclaimed Adelaide, “ he’s done no wrong to me that I cannot forgive.”

“ What ?—has nor he bin cooartin’ another at th’ same time as thee ? Ay, theaw may grooan, theaw young whelp ; but I’ll mak thee sing like a pair o’ bagpipes afore I’ve done wi’ thee.” The latter sentence was addressed to the vanquished youth, who, with his head resting upon the fire-shovel, was groaning most piteously.

“ Alfred ! —Mr Herbert ! —come, get up ! ” said Adelaide, crossing the hearth, and trying to rouse her prostrate lover.

There was no answer to this appeal save another groan, and the girl grew more and more alarmed at the situation.

“ Oh, Dick, you’ve killed him ! I’m sure you have ; ” and Adelaide knelt down by Alfred.

Dick began to feel alarmed lest something

more serious than he had calculated upon should result from the encounter.

“Does he bleed any?” he inquired in a softened manner, “I nobbut hit him onct.”

“You might not, but he’s dying—I’m sure he’s dying. Whatever shall we do? Mr Herbert!—Alfred!”

There was no response to this call, not even a groan.

“He munno dee, Addy, I did no meeant that,” said Dick, his face turning pale as he stooped over his antagonist. “Stond furr, an’ I’ll gether him up. Poor lad! he’s wurr nor I thowt he’d bin,” and Dick raised the helpless youth in his arms, and brought him to the light.

There certainly was occasion for alarm. Alfred’s head drooped over the arm that held it, and Dick stood aghast at the spectacle.

During a few moments of the most anxious suspense, neither Adelaide nor Dick spoke a word. At length the wounded youth exhibited signs of consciousness, and he made an effort to regain his feet.

“That’ll do,” said Dick, expressing considerable relief by the manner in which he uttered the words. “He’s comin’ reawnd like a good un. Get me some wayther, Addy, an’ I’ll wesh his face. Art’ any betther?” The question was addressed to young Herbert, who was doing his best to realize his situation, which for the moment he seemed at a loss to account for.

“What’s this?” said the latter, looking at the blood upon his clothes. “How have I got it?” “Oh, it was you. Well, I’ve deserved it. I don’t blame you. I’m a wretched man, Adelaide, you’ll forgive me?”

“Come, I’ll wesh thy face, an’ cleean thee up a bit, an’ then I’ll tak thee whoam. Sit thee deawn i’ this cheear while I get some warm wayther.”

Dick’s humane intentions were anticipated by Adelaide’s ministering hand. The water had already been brought.

“Neaw then, just stand up, an’ try to balance thyself,” and Dick released his hold of the young man, and prepared himself for the

ablutions. Alfred was no sooner left to himself than he staggered, threw up his hands, uttered a piercing cry, and fell backwards upon the chair.

“ My leg—my leg ! ” he cried, “ it is *broken*.”

“ I’ve done it, by ——, I’ve done it ! ” exclaimed Dick, glancing at his foster-sister with a stupefied look. “ Th’ New Bailey’s my doom, straightforrud.”

The blow which the latter had administered to his adversary had not only knocked him over the chair he was now sitting upon, but had so completely deprived him of self-control, as to place his left leg in such a position that the whole weight of his body was thrown upon it, thereby causing the fracture complained of.

What steps to take in this extremity, Dick was at a loss to devise. It was clear that if he allowed the other to give him a sound thrashing, even supposing such a thing possible, it could not restore the soundness of the broken limb, nor “ take away the grief ” of the wound.

If it could have accomplished either, Dick was prepared to undergo the penalty. But this could not operate as a splint or plaster to the other's ailments, and would, therefore, be a needless exaction. So, what could he do ?

“ Never mind my leg — that can’t be helped now,” said Alfred, “ but let me get home as soon as possible.”

“ If gettin’ thee whoam wur a’,” said Dick, as he applied a moistened sponge to the sufferer’s face,—“ I could manage that i’ quick-sticks.”

“ How ? ”

“ Oh, I could hug a chap a mile if he wurno drunken or stropilous ; so I’ll get thee ont’ my back, an’ carry thee deawn th’ Hollow as choysily as a babby.”

“ Thank you—thank you ! ” said Alfred, as if he had forgotten how he came by the accident.

“ Nay, dunno thank me,” said Dick ;—“ th’ clog owt be upo’ th’ tother fooot, I think. This comes o’ bein a bit strong i’th’ yed, Addy.

If Pothook hadno towd what he has, this would no' ha' bin done."

"Why, what has he told you?" asked Adelaide.

"Nay, it matters nowt neaw. I con see it winno do to meddle. It con happen be explaint different, an' I'm willin' t' wait. We'n summut else i' hond neaw."

Dick by this time had so far removed the outward effects of his blow from Alfred's face as to render his person moderately presentable at home; and after a course of delicate towelling, which sympathy rather than art assisted the former in performing, he prepared himself for undertaking a journey to the Grange.

"Come, get ont' my back," he said, stooping to receive his load, "an' I'll trot deawn th' Hollow like a little jack-ass. Theer, that'll do. Put thy arms under my chin, an' think whoa theaw'rt sticken' for. If theaw's owt say to eawr Addy, I'll put th' flaps o' my ears deawn like a poynter dog, an' yer nowt."

Alfred, with much difficulty, managed to adjust himself in a riding position on Dick's

back, then holding out his hand to Adelaide, a “good night” was uttered, which she almost inaudibly returned, and Dick set out with his charge to the Grange.

How like a farewell sounded that “Good night” to Adelaide’s ears. When the two disappeared in the soft twilight which lingered over the valley, and the footsteps were heard no more, a feeling of loneliness crept over the girl as she stood at the door watching the day decline and the shadows gather around her. The sun had gone down long ago ; but there was still a bright halo in the western sky, which gilded the night, as a ray of hope lingers in the sorrowing heart. The light grew fainter, however, until it died away, and as the chill, solemn-toned wind made mournful music amongst the trees, Adelaide felt as if the grave was closing upon her.

Memory was busy with our young friend, as she stood there watching the setting in of night ; and many happy scenes floated through her imagination; passing like lingering shadows into the vista of faded recollections. The first

look Alfred had given her that required her heart to interpret; the gentle assurances of love; the tender vow, and the “sweet sorrow” of their first parting;—all these came and went, and left a void behind that only grief could fill up.

It was on the occasion of a Christmas party at school that Alfred first whispered to Adelaide the words that never can be forgotten. They were playing “the shy widow,” a favourite Christmas game in Lancashire, and when it came to Adelaide’s turn to personate the “widow,” she remembered how she blushed when Alfred took up the cushion and essayed to win her favour. She remembered to the number of buttons what a beautiful waistcoat he then wore; what a pretty necktie, tied *à la* Byron; the turn-down collar, too, that looked so straight and smooth, and the handkerchief of which he made a curtain to hide their faces from view, as he took the offered kiss, and in return whispered—“*Adelaide, I love you!*”

What delightful evenings they had spent

in each other's company since that meeting ! How she had watched Winter break up his icy reign, and Spring come revelling in with flowers and sunshine. How she had watched the hedges and trees thicken with leaves until the blossoms came, and shed a fragrance around that seemed to partake of Love's own breath. Since then the Grange had been to her as the gilded mosques of Oriental splendour,—shining in the eastern light like the crowns and trumpets of angels set in some purple cloud in the Anchorite's dreams of heaven : its gardens the “Golden Valley of Sweet Waters,” through which, in soft delicious murmurs, pleasures flowed, fed by never-failing fountains. But now the charm was broken ; the golden towers of her heart's dream were wrapped in a sickly film, and the sweet waters murmured no longer.

Thus had Adelaide Wilson lived the short day of her first love. *First* love ? There is no second. Could she have loved again with that genuine passion which her heart had known, and still struggled to retain, she

might have bestowed it on *one* whose devotion towards her held no conditions. Had sickness come and ravaged her beauty; had her eye grown less bright, her cheek become pale, her form wasted, Dick Robinson would have bestowed upon her that species of adoration which only the pure in heart can offer.

Who can foretell as Time moves on, and, like the constant footstep on the sculptured slab, wears out all traces of the name that is held "in affectionate remembrance," the heart may yield up some corner of its domain, in which *another* image may be suffered to take up its abode? If we love no more, we may be passive to another's love; and even feel a softened pleasure in ministering to the happiness of those to whom our existence seems the only tie that binds to earth.

END OF VOL. I.

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